November 2026

As published in The Guardian

Malta

TOURISM SHOWCASES MALTA'S ECONOMIC RISE

In one of Europe's fastest-growing economies, Malta's record tourism reflects broad-based growth – with the services sectors combining to position the country as a key regional partner.

The. Report company



In conversation: CEO of the MTA, Carlo Micallef

The Malta Tourism Authority's chief executive sets out his vision for a sector putting value before volume – from Malta's year-round appeal and authentic experiences to the UK partnerships underpinning its drive for continued success. (page 8)

An independent supplement by The Report Company.

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As published in The Guardian



Aerial panoramic view of Valletta with Mount Carmel church, St.Paul's and St.John's Cathedral, Manoel Island, Fort Manoel and Sliema. Photo: Shutterstock

At the forefront of **European growth**

From tourism and gaming to financial services and technology, Malta's diversified economy is delivering strong, sustainable growth – and the UK is a key partner to continue that story.

In October 2026, Malta hosted the three-day World Travel & Tourism Council Global Summit – widely referred to as the "Davos of tourism" – which brings together leaders from across the global travel and hospitality industry for a programme of more than 100 speakers. In his speech to open the event, Prime Minister Robert Abela called the choice of Malta as a venue a significant vote of confidence in the country's booming tourism sector. "Global leaders from the biggest international brands are all gathered here at the Mediterranean Conference Centre, having come to Malta because they see it as the ideal place to shape the future of this industry," he said. He then used that platform to set out the nation's ambitions in the sector, noting that the shift to higher-value tourism benefits citizens, visitors, workers, businesses and communities alike.

Financial and professional services, already a major pillar, continue to expand as technology reshapes the sector.

Yet tourism is just one driver of an increasingly diversified economy. Financial and professional services, already a major pillar, continue to expand as technology reshapes the sector. Malta's ship registry is the largest in Europe, its aircraft register continues to expand and the Malta Freeport ranks among the Mediterranean's leading transshipment hubs. In parallel, gaming, advanced manufacturing and a fast-developing digital economy – shaped by one of the world's earliest national artificial intelligence strategies – are also engines of growth. Together, they have helped Malta's GDP grow from €14.5 billion in 2019 to €25 billion today.[1] The European Commission expects the country to remain among the fastest-growing economies in the EU, forecasting a 3.6% GDP increase in 2027.

That growth has been achieved with a notable degree of stability. Inflation has held at around 2%[2], well below the euro-area average, according to the Central Bank of Malta, while a broad cross-party consensus on foreign investment and financial policy gives businesses a predictable environment in which to operate. For Christopher Fearne, Malta's minister for foreign and European affairs and trade, that consistency is a defining factor behind the country's economic success. "This rate of growth is not a fluke," he says. "It has been sustained over a number of years."

Malta's trajectory is shaped by Vision 2050, the national development plan whose central aims are productivity-led growth and raising quality

FAST FACTS[4]

€25 billion
Malta's current GDP, up from €14.5 billion in 2019.

3.6% growth
European Commission growth forecast for Malta in 2027, among the fastest in the EU.

£5.2 billion
UK–Malta trade in the 12 months to March 2026, up 39.6% year on year.

841,397
Tourist arrivals from the UK in 2025, Malta's largest source market.





From the Saluting Battery at Upper Barrakka Gardens to Triton Fountain, Malta blends rich history with a dynamic economy and thriving tourism.

As published in The Guardian

of life. Speaking at the summit, Abela made clear that its success depends on continuing to attract investment. "The government's choice is to continue improving people's quality of life and increasing the income of our people," he said. "But to do that, we need to allow the private sector to continue investing within the parameters of Malta Vision 2050 as well."

In that context, the UK is seen as a natural partner, with a relationship built on deep linguistic, cultural, historic and business ties, Commonwealth membership and a company law framework modelled on the British system. Britain remains Malta's largest tourism source market, while commercial links have surged in recent years. UK government figures show bilateral trade rose 39.6% to £5.2 billion in the 12 months to the end of the first quarter of 2026[3] – and as the EU moves to favour goods produced inside the bloc, Malta offers British companies a natural base from which to serve the European market. For Fearne, meanwhile, the Commonwealth's scope represents another area of opportunity. "The Commonwealth is a supra-regional organisation, which makes it genuinely distinctive," he says. "It creates substantial opportunities for intra-Commonwealth trade that we are only beginning to exploit."

For investors, Malta's size represents a key asset. Decision-makers are accessible, institutions can move quickly and partnerships between government and business are easier to build than in larger economies. That agility has allowed the country to move early on emerging sectors, from online gaming to digital finance and artificial intelligence. "Being a small country is actually an advantage," says Fearne. "We are agile and flexible – not in our regulatory standards, but in the way we make foreign investment work."

Britain remains Malta's largest tourism source market, while commercial links have surged in recent years.

Complementing that agility is the appeal of an economy with strong synergies between its key sectors. Air connectivity built for holidaymakers also serves business travellers and investors; the legal, financial and digital services that grew alongside tourism now compete internationally in their own right; and a growing calendar of conferences and events, including the WTTC summit itself, brings decision-makers to the islands. Specialist institutions such as the Institute of Tourism Studies, meanwhile, are developing the skilled workforce on which both tourism and the wider services economy depend. In turn, that wider economy is helping tourism move towards a higher-value, year-round model – cementing the kind of sustainable growth that has become Malta's calling card.











1. Valletta's historic fortress city sits surrounded by Marsamxett Harbour and Sliema. 2. Inside St. John's Co-Cathedral in Valletta, showcasing its grand Baroque interior. 3. A canopy of bright umbrellas contrasts with historic Maltese limestone architecture. 4. Mediterranean Conference Centre, in Valletta. 5. Traditional Maltese boat floats along the Valletta Waterfront.
Photos: 1, 2, 3, 5, Malta Tourism Authority; 4, Shutterstock

IN NUMBERS

588,254	316 km²	2004	2
Population as of 2025 [5]	***Total land area of the islands*** [5]	***Year Malta joined the EU***	***Official languages – Maltese and English***

Sources:

[1] TVM News, 'PM Says Malta Must Remain a Country That Attracts Quality Investment', 8 October 2026.

[2] Ibid.

[3] UK Department for Business & Trade, Malta Trade and Investment Factsheet, 24 September 2026.

[4] PM's speech at World Travel & Tourism Council Summit 2026, European Commission, UK Govt Trade & Investment Malta Factsheet, Malta Tourism Authority.

[5] Eurostat.

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Financial services continue to **power ahead**

Malta's powerhouse financial sector is a key driver of economic growth. Now the government is backing ongoing diversification.

Financial services is a mainstay of Malta's economy, accounting for around 8% of GDP[1]. In 2026, its contribution has continued to grow. Financial and insurance activities expanded by 9% year on year in the first quarter[2], accelerating to 12.2% in Q2[3] – the highest growth rate among services activities. With services the key driver of an overall increase of 4.5% in GDP in the quarter[4], the figures highlight the sector's enduring importance.



St. Julian's modern business district reflects Malta's thriving financial sector.

Alongside traditional strengths in banking, insurance and asset management, maritime and aviation finance have developed around Malta's shipping and aircraft registers, while family offices represent another area of opportunity. "We are speaking to Americans who tell us our jurisdictional framework is very close to what they are used to in Delaware," says FinanceMalta Chairman George Vella. "Malta's sustained growth over the last 10 to 15 years continues to attract attention, because wealthy individuals and family offices always want to be associated with jurisdictions that are moving forward."

Financial and insurance activities expanded by 9% year on year in the first quarter, accelerating to 12.2% in Q2.

Fintech is another area where Malta's established strengths are generating new opportunities. Its gaming and financial services industries have developed expertise in payments, digital platforms and compliance, creating a foundation for growth in financial technology. That's paired with a pioneering regulatory approach, which has helped attract specialist talent and a growing network of firms providing services across the value chain. This concentration of expertise has become an important advantage for international operators seeking to establish or expand their presence in Malta.

Vision 2050, the national development plan, captures the country's ambitions for the wider sector. It projects annual growth of 9% to 10% in financial services to 2035, which would see gross value added rise from roughly €2 billion to €4.8–€5.3 billion, or around 13% of projected GDP[5]. Investment funds and wealth management join fintech among the projected drivers of that expansion, supported by Malta's regulatory and economic strengths – and its geographic advantages. "In a globalised world, physical location still matters," says Nicolai Vella Falzon, managing partner of leading legal firm Fenech & Fenech Advocates. "Malta remains an attractive, credible and well-positioned option for international businesses and UK investors in particular."

As the sole, autonomous regulator, the Malta Financial Services Authority (MFSA) oversees the whole of the financial services sector, including, since 2018, virtual financial assets. As the National Competent Authority under MiCA, it's taken on a role of significant standing as a leading EU crypto-asset regulator. The authority's FinTech Regulatory Sandbox, which allows companies to test innovations in the financial services sector for a specified period of time, and its dedicated FinTech supervision function distinguish the MFSA from many of its peers. In practical terms, the authority operates at considerable scale. In 2025, it approved 1,023 authorisations and held 1,849 supervisory interactions – demonstrating the efficiency that has become one of its calling cards.

Sources:

[1] Malta Financial Services Authority, 'Malta's Financial Sector Grows Steadily as MFSA Sharpens Oversight and Protection', MFSA News, 16 June 2025.

[2] MaltaToday, 'GDP Grew by 3.9% in First Three Months of 2026', MaltaToday, 3 August 2026.

[3] Times of Malta, 'Malta's Economy Grows 4.5% as GDP Hits €6.5 Billion in Second Quarter of 2026', Times of Malta, 27 August 2026.

[4] National Statistics Office, Gross Domestic Product: Q2 2026, Government of Malta, 2026.

[5] Government of Malta, Malta Vision 2050, February 2026.

INTERVIEW

Alexander Demarco
Governor, Central Bank



As Malta's growth model evolves, its central bank combines a firm focus on stability with a clear vision for a more productive economy.

"There is scope for much greater cooperation in fintech, digital payments, sustainable finance, AI and other areas where UK expertise and investment can complement Malta's position within the EU."

Under Governor Alexander Demarco, the bank recently launched its four-year strategic plan. Here, he discusses its institutional priorities, the need for productivity-led growth and the scope for closer UK cooperation.

Q: What are your priorities for the bank?

Our vision is to be a trusted, credible, independent and forward-looking institution to serve Malta well within the Eurosystem. The anchor of this institution remains our commitment to price stability, financial stability, independence from fiscal policy and loyalty to the public interest. However, we need to adapt ourselves to a changing environment. Risks and technologies are evolving, and we therefore need to maintain the effectiveness of our institution by acting through stronger evidence-based analysis, building resilient systems and work processes and adopting innovation in a responsible manner.

Q: What structural factors are key for maintaining economic momentum?

Malta's growth performance remains strong, but the nature of growth will become increasingly important. With the labour market already tight, we cannot expect future expansion to come mainly from having more people working in the economy. The key challenge is therefore to raise the productive capacity of the economy.

Malta needs continued investment in technology, digitalisation, automation and artificial intelligence, both by businesses and in the public sector. A more productive economy requires a workforce with the right skills. And Malta needs to create the conditions for more investment and higher-value economic activity. This means supporting investment in research and development, innovation and new business models, while also encouraging existing sectors to move towards activities with higher value added.

Q: Where do you see the greatest opportunities for deeper Malta-UK cooperation?

The sectors underpinning the Malta-UK relationship are already among the more high-value-added parts of our economy. Financial services are probably the clearest example. Malta can offer the EU market, an established financial services ecosystem and an agile business environment, while the UK brings deep pools of capital, expertise and one of the world's most developed financial technology sectors. There is scope for much greater cooperation in fintech, digital payments, sustainable finance, AI and other areas where UK expertise and investment can complement Malta's position within the EU.



Set within Valletta's historic walls, the Central Bank of Malta anchors the stability of an expanding financial sector.

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FOCUS ON **FINANCEMALTA**

Setting the benchmark

FinanceMalta is a public-private initiative set up to promote the country as a business hub.

Working closely with government and industry, FinanceMalta helps strengthen the country's financial services framework. Here, Chairman George Vella discusses UK ties and growth in emerging sectors.

Q: How do you want Malta to be perceived by UK partners?
I would love the UK business community to think of Malta as an offshore extension of the UK. Most of the practitioners who are at their prime today are UK-trained. Most of the governance structures we have are closely modelled on those of the UK. We have tried our very best to take what is distinctive in UK governance and replicate it here. The added benefit is that we are still in Europe. Malta is a UK-aligned jurisdiction that remains firmly within Europe.

Q: What is driving the expansion in Malta's finance sector?
This growth is testament to Malta's shift towards a knowledge-based economy. Other jurisdictions are increasingly coming to Malta to learn from our experiences. One very clear demonstration of our versatility is what happened when we were grey-listed. We went on record as one of the fastest jurisdictions to exit grey-listing – in under a year. That process created significant opportunities for our regulators and the professionals involved to share their knowledge and systems with other jurisdictions. The same dynamic is now playing out in fintech. Seven or eight years ago, Malta had already set its sights very clearly on that sector, invested significantly in the required skills and attracted foreign talent who wanted to be part of the ecosystem. Today, other jurisdictions use Malta as a benchmark.

Q: What are Malta's regulatory strengths?
Malta's early leadership in fintech, anchored by our Virtual Financial Assets Act, sent the market a clear message: if you are in this sector for the long term, robust regulation is in your interest. We introduced the strongest and most demanding framework available at the time, and it was voluntary. Some operators saw it as excessive and chose not to comply. Others recognised that a stamp of approval from a jurisdiction leading on regulation was precisely what they needed in new and uncertain territory.
What has happened with MiCA has validated that second group entirely. Those who chose the regulated route and built their roots in Malta over the past seven or eight years are now seeing an ecosystem forming around them – which is exactly what they wanted.



"Malta is a UK-aligned jurisdiction that remains firmly within Europe."

George Vella,
Chairman, FinanceMalta

FinanceMalta

www.financemalta.org

FINANCE INSIGHTS

FOCUS ON **MAPFRE MALTA PLC**



Etienne Sciberras,
President & CEO, Mapfre Malta plc

Mapfre Malta Group is a leader in insurance, savings, investments and pensions solutions, providing customers with holistic service. "Our purpose is not simply to sell insurance products. It is to take care of the individual, family and business needs of our clients," says President and CEO Etienne Sciberras.
Part of the Mapfre SA Group, which operates in 38 countries, the company pairs the strengths of an international brand with deep local market knowledge. That combination makes Mapfre Malta a trusted partner for companies relocating to the islands. "We are also well placed to support the businesses and their employees, ensuring they have access to the insurance solutions they need," says Sciberras. "That continuity and security is, I believe, a genuine source of reassurance."

mapfre Malta

www.mapfre.com.mt

FOCUS ON **CSB GROUP**



Michael J. Zammit,
Group CEO, CSB Group

Approaching its 40th anniversary, CSB Group offers a broad range of specialised business solutions and commercial services to corporate and private clients seeking to build a presence in Malta. "Financial services have put Malta on the map, and we've positioned CSB as the partner of choice for clients seeking to establish or relocate to Malta and take advantage of its fiscal and regulatory environment," says Group CEO Michael J. Zammit.
That's backed by CSB's global network, which includes international partners and associates who are leaders in their respective fields. "Our 40th anniversary is a milestone, not a destination, and our ambitions remain undiminished," says Zammit. "We treat our clients' businesses and affairs as though they were our own. That is where we excel."

CSB GROUP

www.csbgroup.com

BANK OF VALLETTA



Kenneth Farrugia,
CEO, Bank of Valletta

"Since the third quarter of 2025, our asset base has moved to €17.5 billion and our market capitalisation over the last four years has grown from €400–500 million to €1.5 billion. That is the clearest demonstration of the trust the market places in this institution."

H6



Benji Borg,
CEO, H6 & Director, 9H

"H6 is an AI-native finance layer that sits on top of your ERP, bringing automation, control, and intelligence without replacing existing systems. Beyond accounts payable, H6 turns financial data into procurement and commercial intelligence."

INSTITUTE OF TOURISM STUDIES (ITS)



Pierre Fenech,
CEO, Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS)

"Given the success of the Skills Pass scheme, a mandatory government-approved skill and training verification scheme for people working in front-line and operational tourism/hospitality roles, the government has decided to extend the model to other industries as well."

THE CONVENIENCE SHOP



David Tabone,
CEO, The Convenience Shop

"Malta gives access to the broader European market under a familiar, English-language legal and regulatory framework. The business conditions are strong, the economy is growing – GDP is running at around 4%, which most countries would dream about."

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Tourism's **record run continues**

As arrival numbers hit new highs, spend is growing even faster – with UK visitors key to Malta's new tourism strategy.



1

Launched by Prime Minister Robert Abela in February 2026, Malta Vision 2050 sets out the country's long-term plan, with priorities including sustainable economic growth, better public services and more efficient use of Malta's scarce land and sea. As part of that agenda, tourism has a clear role to play. Already a key economic driver, the sector offers the potential to generate additional value without placing greater strain on a compact island. "Our tourism industry has been a long-standing pillar of the economy that has proved its resilience through every cycle," says Carlo Micallef, CEO of the Malta Tourism Authority (MTA).

The MTA's strategy has shifted in line with those wider goals, prioritising increases in value over simple growth. Data from 2025 shows that approach is already paying off: arrivals rose by 12.9% to just over 4 million – setting a new record – but tourist spending grew faster, climbing 18.6% to €3.9 billion. Average spend per visitor increased by 5.1% to €971, and spend per night by 6.9% to €153, across 25.4 million guest nights. A dedicated effort to position Malta as a year-round destination is also showing results. The first and final quarters of 2025 each gained share of total arrivals, while the peak summer quarter's share continued to ease.[1]

Within that broader picture, the UK is central to the sector's success. Britain remained Malta's largest source market by some distance, accounting for more than a fifth of all tourists, with arrivals up 19.5% on 2024 and spending up 25.9%[1] – again demonstrating that the value-over-volume initiative is bearing fruit. Long-standing ties, direct connections and a shared language underpin that relationship, providing the basis for the kind of deeper connection the MTA is seeking to build when shaping the guest experience. "That kind of connection creates loyalty, generates authentic advocacy and sustains long-term competitiveness in a way that no marketing budget alone can achieve," says Micallef.

Arrivals rose by 12.9% to just over 4 million – setting a new record – but tourist spending grew faster, climbing 18.6%.

Early figures for 2026 suggest those gains are continuing to accrue. Between January and July, Malta welcomed 2.62 million tourists, up 18.6% year on year, while total spend rose 15.8% to €2.33 billion. UK arrivals grew by a further 18.8%, alongside rapid growth from Poland and Romania, both up by more than 50%, as well as Scandinavia and the US. Notably, business arrivals rose by 26.3%[1], underlining Malta's growing profile as a destination for business travel and for the meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions segment.

One of the keys to sustaining that growth lies in attracting investment from UK and European partners. With a clear long-term strategy and a sector growing in both volume and value, opportunities extend from high-end hotels to new visitor experiences and the infrastructure that supports them. For Micallef, the island's track record and advantages provide the ideal foundation: "Malta has demonstrated consistent political stability over many decades, and our economic performance has been among the strongest in the European Union in percentage terms."

€3.9 Bn

Total tourist spending in Malta in 2025, up 18.6% on 2024 and growing faster than arrivals as the focus shifts to value over volume. [1]

20.9%

The UK's share of all tourist arrivals in 2025, keeping Britain Malta's largest source market, with UK visitor spending up 25.9%. [1]



2



3



4

1. An aerial view over Valletta, the capital city of Malta. 2. Exploring the sea caves of the Blue Grotto by boat. 3. A quiet street scene in historic Birgu. 4. View of St Anne's Church across Marsaskala Bay. Photos: Malta Tourism Authority

[1] *Source: Malta Tourism Authority, Local Tourism Performance: January – December 2025.*

As published in The Guardian

EXPERIENCE MALTA

The islands for all seasons: why Malta offers something for everyone

From ancient temples and turquoise lagoons to village festas and Michelin-starred dining, the Maltese islands offer a wealth of experiences.

Few destinations pack as much into so small a space as the Maltese archipelago. Across its three inhabited islands, visitors can move from prehistoric temples to Baroque cathedrals, sheltered coves to clifftop walks and lively village festas to fine dining – often in the space of a single day. That variety, combined with a Mediterranean climate that averages 3,000 hours of sunshine per year, makes Malta a destination for every season – and every type of traveller.

All of that is in addition to the islands' celebrated beaches. Wide sandy bays, swimming spots carved into the limestone rock and famously clear waters draw swimmers, divers and sailors for much of the year, while between Malta and its sister island Gozo lies Comino, home to the turquoise Blue Lagoon. Gozo itself, just a 25-minute ferry ride away, offers a greener, more rural counterpoint, with a slower pace of life, the hilltop Cittadella in Victoria and landscapes steeped in the legend of the nymph Calypso.

Visitors prize Malta for an experience that feels authentic, unhurried and distinctly Maltese

Whether drawn by the sea, the food or the history, visitors prize Malta for an experience that feels authentic, unhurried and distinctly Maltese – one that caters for every taste and every escape.

FAST FACTS[2]

7,000 years
Of history, with temples older than Stonehenge and the Pyramids.

3
UNESCO World Heritage Sites, including the capital, Valletta.

3,000 hours
Of sunshine a year on average, among the highest in Europe.



Panoramic view from Tal-Mixta Cave over the red sands and blue waters of Ramla Bay, Gozo. Photo: Malta Tourism Authority

[2] *Source: Visit Malta.*

THE MANY SIDES OF MALTA

From sun-drenched beaches to centuries-old traditions, three signature experiences showcase the variety that awaits in Malta.

BEACHES TO TAKE THE BREATH AWAY



Blue Lagoon, Comino. Photo: Malta Tourism Authority

Malta boasts a wealth of options for sun worshippers. On the north-west coast, the sweeping beaches of Golden Sands and Għajn Tuffieħa are among the islands' biggest draws, while St Peter's Pool near Marsaxlokk is a natural lido of flat limestone ledges framing deep, crystal-clear water, popular with swimmers and snorkellers. Comino's sea caves are best explored by boat, and leisure cruises, kayaking and surfing offer a different perspective on the islands' dramatic coastline.

A TRUE TASTE OF THE MEDITERRANEAN

Influenced by the flavours of nearby Sicily and North Africa, Maltese cuisine is Mediterranean through and through. Visitors can sample ravjul, the islands' take on ravioli, alongside pastizzi, freshly landed seafood, local honey, olive oil and sea salt harvested from coastal pans. Al fresco dining is a way of life, from harbourside tables to village squares, while Michelin-starred restaurants showcase the creativity of Malta's chefs and the quality of authentic Maltese produce.



Mussels and shellfish served al fresco - a highlight of traditional Maltese seafood. Photo: Malta Tourism Authority

A CULTURE ALL OF ITS OWN



An aerial view of the Mellieħa Parish Church overlooking Mellieħa Bay. Photo: Malta Tourism Authority

With 7,000 years of history, Malta's heritage is woven into everyday life. Its megalithic temples predate both Stonehenge and the Pyramids, and the islands count three UNESCO World Heritage Sites, including the underground Ħal Saflieni Hypogeum and the capital, Valletta. The city is home to St John's Co-Cathedral, which houses the only signed Caravaggio, while watchtowers and fortresses still guard the coast. Village festas and traditional crafts such as glassmaking keep that heritage vibrant today.

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Shaping **sustainable tourism growth**

With record visitor numbers behind it, Malta is now putting value before volume – building a tourism model that protects its rich heritage while deepening ties with the UK.



Carlo Micallef, *CEO of the Malta Tourism Authority*

The UK remains a cornerstone of Malta's tourism economy. Around 840,000 British visitors travelled to the islands in 2025, spending approximately €940 million[1] – and keeping the UK as Malta's largest source of arrivals. With the island nation targeting 4.5 million total visitors in 2026, the priority for the Malta Tourism Authority (MTA) is no longer simply growth. "Our focus is now firmly on consolidating that base and increasing the value generated per visitor," says CEO Carlo Micallef.

The shift towards value sits within a broader responsible tourism strategy, one designed to ensure tourism supports Malta's heritage, traditions and crafts. For Micallef, it is also a response to what visitors themselves want: "A destination can easily fall into the trap of offering visitors a home away from home, but we have learned that this is not what people are seeking," he says. "They want a different experience to take home with them, in their memories, in the stories they tell and in what they share with others."

Malta's farming community offers an example of the approach in action. Visitors can pick strawberries, press olives, harvest grapes and bake Maltese bread, tasting it warm from the oven – experiences that bring alive Malta's traditions and local life. "In an era of mass production, smallholder farmers in Malta cannot compete on volume, but tourism creates a new purpose for their work," says Micallef. In that sense, tourism acts as both an economic driver and a way to sustain rural traditions, while giving visitors a deeper connection with the islands. "We want visitors to arrive as tourists and leave feeling like locals."

Rural experiences are just one strand of the broader offer. Malta combines thousands of years of layered history with Baroque architecture, a vibrant food and wine scene and an extensive events calendar. For British visitors and businesses alike, the long-standing ties between the two countries add a natural appeal – alongside the practical benefits of Malta's EU membership. "For investors, Malta represents a stable environment within the EU, with a growing economy and a well-established tourism sector that continues to outperform," says Micallef.

In this interview, the MTA's CEO discusses Malta's transformation into a year-round destination, what sets it apart from its Mediterranean rivals and why technology can never replace the human touch.

The UK remains a cornerstone of Malta's tourism economy.

Q: How has Malta's tourism industry evolved since your appointment?
Tourism is absolutely central to Malta's economy, and it was among the industries that suffered most during the pandemic. In 2019, our record year before the pandemic, we hosted 2.75 million tourists, with the UK consistently our largest source market, followed by Germany, Italy, France, Poland and the Benelux countries.
When the pandemic hit, everything stopped, but we never stopped promoting Malta. We launched a campaign called Dream Now, Travel Later, which proved very successful, and used that period to deepen our relationships with travel agents and tour operators, expand our digital presence and educate both B2B and B2C audiences on what Malta truly has to offer.
The recovery, when it came, was remarkably swift. In 2022, when I took office, we reached 2.3 million visitors. By 2023 that figure had risen to 3 million, by 2024 to 3.75 million and last year we surpassed the 4 million mark, recording 4,022,000 arrivals. But the numbers alone do not tell the full story. The real shift has been in the nature of the tourism itself, moving away from the traditional sun-and-sea model that once made Malta dependent on the package tour operator, towards a far more diverse, year-round offering built around culture, heritage and authentic experience.

Q: How do you aim to position Malta in UK and European markets?
We are already in a strong position in the UK market, and across many of the markets where we have successfully established Malta and Gozo as year-round destinations. Visitors no longer come solely for sun and sea. They come for our history, our culture, our heritage, our gastronomy, our wines, our sports

BIO

1997 Joined National Tourism Organisation Malta

2003 Became MTA director for Benelux and Nordics

2014 Appointed MTA chief marketing officer

2017 Named Institute of Tourism Studies chairman

2022 Appointed CEO of Malta Tourism Authority

training camps, our events, our concerts and our festivals. It is a rich and varied mix of motivations that draws people to our islands throughout the year.

A telling indicator of how far we have come was a recent Eurostat finding that Malta has the lowest share of tourism arrivals in the peak summer months of any Mediterranean island in the European Union. July and August account for only around 21% of our annual visitor figures. For an island in the Mediterranean to have achieved that kind of seasonal balance, with some of the highest proportional visitor numbers in winter, is a significant achievement.

Our marketing strategy is geographically targeted but audience specific. We reach people according to their demographics, income levels, interests and proximity to airports with direct connectivity to Malta. Travellers increasingly prefer to fly from their nearest regional airport rather than travel to a hub, so route connectivity is foundational to our approach. Within those catchment areas, we then target specific segments, whether that is diving, heritage, gastronomy or cultural experiences.

The broader shift in what people want from travel has also worked in our favour. The world has moved on from simply visiting a museum to wanting to experience it. People want to hear the story behind an artefact, to understand who made it, how it was used, what it meant. Malta's history is extraordinarily layered. Anyone who wanted to control the Mediterranean had to hold Malta, and that strategic reality brought successive civilisations to our shores, from the Phoenicians and Romans through to the Knights of St John and the Second World War. That depth of history gives us a remarkable story to tell.

Q: What is Malta's competitive advantage as a destination?

Small is beautiful, in the sense that a territory of 316 square kilometres contains extraordinary diversity. Our layers of history, our landscapes, our architecture and our culture are all packed into a compact area, which means visitors can access an enormous variety within a short holiday.

English is widely spoken across Malta, our legal and legislative framework is modelled on the British system and we drive on the left. These practical affinities matter, particularly for UK travellers, and they reflect a long-standing friendship between our two countries.

What distinguishes us further is that we have preserved our heritage without sacrificing our authenticity to development. Our bastions, our Baroque architecture, our medieval streets – all of this remains intact and alive. The film industry has recognised this diversity for years, using Malta to represent Greece, the Middle East and other European settings. That versatility reflects the genuine diversity of what we have to offer.

Beyond the richness of the experience itself, Malta continues to offer strong value. The combination of concentrated attractions, short travel distances and competitive pricing makes it an appealing proposition for visitors who want to make the most of their time and their money.

Q: Why is now the right moment for UK investors to consider Malta?

The message is straightforward: Malta offers stability, excellent connectivity and a proven track record of economic performance. We are connected to approximately 120 routes by air, providing fast and accessible links for people, alongside our free port, which serves as a key node for cargo and sea freight. That combination of air and maritime connectivity, within a politically stable, EU-member economy whose legal system is rooted in British tradition, makes Malta a compelling and well-founded choice for investment.

Q: How important has that air connectivity been to unlocking investment?

It has been absolutely central, and I say that from personal experience. I remember a time when airlines would not consider Malta because there was not enough volume to sustain a route. I remember investors who, because there was not sufficient air or sea connectivity, found it genuinely difficult to commit capital here – the logistics of importing raw materials or exporting goods simply did not add up. That was a real structural barrier.

We have overcome that. Today, Malta is connected across Europe and into the Middle East and North America, and we are looking towards further routes from Asia and Latin America. That connectivity has been transformative, not only for tourism but for the wider economy. And it underpins the investment case: you cannot attract top-tier hospitality brands or serious investors without the infrastructure to bring people in and move goods efficiently.

Q: How are innovation and sustainability shaping your strategy?

The right balance is to apply technology to the back office, to visitor flow management, operational efficiency and climate-friendly resource use, while protecting and prioritising the human connection at every point of the guest experience.

Our industry does face labour shortages, and we rely significantly on workers from overseas to meet demand. Technology can help us manage operations more efficiently and more sustainably. But the front end of tourism, the moment when a guest



interacts with a person, whether that is at a hotel, a restaurant, a heritage site or a village festival, cannot and should not be replaced by a screen. The beauty of tourism must remain the human connection. That is what makes it worth travelling for, and that is what no algorithm can replicate.

Q: What is your goal for the sector's next stage of development?

My ambition is to lead this authority and this industry into a phase of tourism that delivers greater value than it does today – greater economic value, but also greater respect for what makes Malta special.

We are at a genuine inflection point. Malta is making a deliberate shift towards quality tourism, towards a more responsible and sustainable model: preserving heritage, respecting our communities, moving away from volume-led thinking. Vision 2050 sets out that direction clearly. And there is now real opportunity for top international brands to invest in Malta – in quality accommodation, in experiences, in digital solutions, in sustainable mobility and in the services that will help us grow in the way we want to grow.

The right investors, the right partners, the right brands – those who share that vision – will find Malta ready and open. And if I can be the person who helps lead this industry through that paradigm shift while protecting everything that makes this destination so special, that would be my dream.

"There is now real opportunity for top international brands to invest in Malta – in quality accommodation, in experiences, in digital solutions, in sustainable mobility."

Carlo Micallef
CEO, Malta Tourism Authority

[1] *Source: Malta Tourism Authority, Local Tourism Performance: January – December 2025.*



1



2

1. Traditional Maltese balconies in the Three Cities.
2. Boat tours along the iconic blue waters and cliffs of Comino.
Photos: Malta Tourism Authority

VisitMalta

www.visitmalta.com

An independent supplement produced by **The Report Company** and d

As published in The Guardian

FOCUS ON **INSTITUTE OF TOURISM STUDIES (ITS)**

Malta's standard-bearer: **ITS and the future of hospitality**

As Malta's tourism sector continues to surge, the Institute of Tourism Studies is setting the bar for quality – training the industry's future leaders and opening its doors to students and partners from the UK.

Tourism is one of the cornerstones of Malta's economy. Its islands welcomed more than 4 million visitors in 2025, who spent a total of around €4 billion[1] – representing a significant contribution to GDP. That scale means the Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS), the national institution for tourism and hospitality education, is as important to the wider economy as it is to the sector itself. "In a country where around 18% of GDP derives from tourism, the relevance of an institution like ours is arguably greater than it would be elsewhere," says CEO Pierre Fenech.

The global network ITS has built over the past decade includes agreements with institutions in China, Japan and several African countries.

With demand continuing to rise, the focus across government, industry and ITS has turned to quality and generating greater value from every visit. That requires first-rate hotels, restaurants and infrastructure – but equally important is first-rate service. "Tourism is an industry that depends heavily on human interaction, and that is precisely where ITS comes in," says Fenech.

The institute's leader is well placed to make that assessment. One of ITS's earliest students, Fenech spent 25 years in the industry before returning as CEO in 2015. Under his leadership, ITS has expanded beyond vocational training to offer bachelor's and master's degrees at levels 6 and 7 of the European Qualifications Framework, and has become one of only three self-accrediting institutions in Malta. It was also one of the main drivers behind the Skills Pass, a scheme to raise standards across the tourism workforce – and one the government is now extending to other industries.

The focus on standards plays a central role in shaping the curriculum. Programme advisory committees of industry professionals, academics, students and alumni review every course, with particular attention to how AI and new technology will reshape the sector. "We prepare tomorrow's workforce, and we must ensure our students are ready not for the industry as it exists today, but for what it will look like in five and ten years' time," says Fenech.

The global network ITS has built over the past decade includes agreements with institutions in China, Japan and several African countries – a setup that, in Fenech's view, enables genuine exchange. "Institutions learn from us, but we also learn from them," he says. "It is important that we remain open to new ideas, new technologies and new learning techniques." International students account for up to 35% of enrolment, while campuses in Shanghai and Zhengzhou allow Chinese students to study in their own country. Similar projects are in development in other markets. ITS also offers a diploma in climate-friendly travel, with around 50 scholarships a year for students from lower-income countries.

With teaching already conducted in English and the close links between Britain and Malta, clear opportunities exist for partnerships with UK institutions – particularly as British students will regain access to the Erasmus programme from 2027. "One model that has worked well elsewhere is the 2+2 agreement, where students spend part of their studies in their home country and then complete two years with us in Malta," says Fenech. "We welcome any UK institution that wishes to explore this kind of arrangement and give its students that opportunity."



ITS Malta students presenting pastries and desserts while being graded by a lecturer during a course. Photo: ITS



A hospitality student during a cocktail competition at ITS Malta. Photo: ITS



"Tourism is an industry that depends heavily on human interaction, and that is precisely where ITS comes in."

Pierre Fenech
CEO, Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS)

IN NUMBERS [1,2]

4m+	18%	2	2	35%
Visitors to Malta in 2025	*Tourism's share of GDP*	*ITS's campuses in China*	*ITS's campuses in Malta and Gozo*	*International students at ITS*

Sources:

[1] Malta Tourism Authority, Local Tourism Performance: January – December 2025.

[2] Interview with Pierre Fenech, CEO of the Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS).

ITS
INSTITUTE OF TOURISM STUDIES
www.its.edu.mt

As published in The Guardian

An economy with **innovation at its centre**

Malta's track record of embracing innovation continues to underpin its ambitions in AI and other high-growth industries.



From advanced computing infrastructure to strategic partnerships, Malta is building the technological foundation and community initiatives to drive its nationwide AI strategy.

Malta has built a reputation for moving early in emerging industries. The country was among the first jurisdictions to regulate online gaming, introduced a pioneering framework for virtual financial assets in 2018 and adopted one of the earliest national artificial intelligence strategies in 2019. Its innovation sector now spans fintech, gaming technology, advanced manufacturing and life sciences, supported by institutions including the Malta Digital Innovation Authority (MDIA).

One of Malta's most significant recent initiatives is the AI for All project, a free AI literacy programme.

That ecosystem has been built on a wider commitment to creating conditions in which emerging industries can grow, including government support, access to investment and a regulatory framework designed to enable innovation – not act as a barrier. "Our approach was to give the industry the tools, the space and the support to develop, and then introduce regulatory structure as the landscape matures," says MDIA CEO Kenneth Brincat.

One of Malta's most significant recent initiatives is the AI for All project, a free AI literacy programme offered to residents aged 14 and above. Launched in May 2026, the programme attracted 50,000 enrolments in the first four months, with 26,000 completing it – equivalent to roughly 4% of residents. Brincat says this exceeds uptake in comparable schemes in Singapore and Finland. For a compact nation, the government sees AI adoption as a key to relieving the pressure created by a growing population. "The AI strategy can address this directly by increasing productivity and reducing labour intensity," he adds.



MDIA

Building a bridge between regulation and innovation

Malta Digital Innovation Authority (MDIA) CEO Kenneth Brincat discusses growing the tech ecosystem.

"Malta offers a unique opportunity for British companies seeking to develop, test and scale emerging technologies within a supportive and agile regulatory environment."

Q: Which decisions have most defined your tenure?
One of the first major initiatives was the launch of a digital innovation hub, designed to facilitate and enable digital innovation across the country – offering startups space, mentorship, facilities and access to funding. The other significant move was the introduction of sandboxes. In 2021, we launched the Technology Assurance Sandbox, which provides a flexible testing environment for companies developing new products.
The core shift was moving MDIA from the mindset of a regulator as a policing or certification institution, to an authority that genuinely assists, enables and regulates industry to grow.

Q: What are Malta's key advantages for UK tech partners?
Malta offers a unique opportunity for British companies seeking to develop, test and scale emerging technologies within a supportive and agile regulatory environment. Malta has a proven track record when it comes to regulatory agility. This means we can respond to new developments in a relatively short timeframe.
For UK investors and partners, that responsiveness matters enormously. They are operating in fast-moving sectors where a regulatory environment that can keep pace is a genuine competitive advantage.

Q: How has integrating the eSkills Malta Foundation expanded MDIA's remit?
Since 2021, MDIA has been running a number of projects around digital literacy and the upskilling and reskilling of the workforce – an issue that has become increasingly urgent.



Kenneth Brincat,
CEO, MDIA

The eSkills Malta Foundation had a very similar remit. The government took the decision to integrate its role within MDIA because the authority had grown significantly and it made sense to optimise the services both entities were providing rather than operate them in parallel. The integrated foundation brings with it a broader mandate that extends to general public digital literacy – including programmes aimed at children and teenagers.

mdia

www.mdia.gov.mt

INSIGHTS



Etienne Sciberras,
President & CEO, Mapfre Malta

"We are living through a period of unprecedented technological change, and we are investing accordingly, in innovation, digitalisation and automation."

Nikhil Patil,
CEO, GO plc



"GO plays an inordinately large role in Maltese society. If internet at GO goes down, planes cannot take off and hospitals cannot function."

An independent supplement produced by **The Report Company** and d

As published in The Guardian



Superyachts at the Three Cities and Grand Harbour Marina showcase Malta's premier maritime cluster and its role in attracting key foreign investment.

Photo: Malta Tourism Authority

Sustained growth underpins **Malta's investment appeal**

Malta's status as one of the European Union's most compelling investment destinations is built on a decade of broad-based growth – providing a robust platform for further expansion.

Over the past decade, Malta has delivered one of the strongest growth records in Europe. In its February 2026 consultation, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) noted that Malta's economy has expanded by an average of nearly 7% per year over the period, driven mainly by tourism, gaming and professional services, while per-capita income has almost doubled since 2013 to exceed the EU average. That performance saw the IMF move Malta from an annual to a two-year surveillance cycle, signalling confidence in the country's economic stability and policy framework.

Per-capita income has almost doubled since 2013 to exceed the EU average.

That confidence is reflected in investor perceptions. In EY's 2025 Malta Attractiveness Survey, 79% of respondents rated the country as an attractive location for investment, citing social stability, corporate taxation and telecoms infrastructure as the main competitive advantages. That combination has proved a winning proposition for high-value industry, with semiconductor company STMicroelectronics' recent €250 million expansion project hailed by the government as the largest foreign direct investment in Malta's history. In parallel, Malta's compact scale, accessible regulators and agile legal framework position it as a testing ground where companies can trial new products and business models before scaling them across the EU.

At the same time, Malta's traditional geographic strengths remain just as relevant. Sitting at the heart of the Mediterranean, on the shipping routes linking Europe, North Africa and the Middle East, the islands have been a strategic hub for centuries. Today that location underpins a substantial maritime cluster, from the Malta Freeport – one of the region's key transshipment centres – to ship registration, yacht services and logistics.

Going forward, the national strategy to sustain this momentum centres on diversification and productivity gains, built on investment in skills and technology – from a national AI literacy programme to Malta's first high-performance computer, launched in 2025 – and supported by major investments in port regeneration, transport and clean energy under the Vision 2050 plan. In parallel, TradeMalta, the country's trade promotion agency, is working to help domestic companies to expand, collaborate and compete on a wider scale.

"We want to build the framework and provide the assistance that enables companies to identify synergies and form meaningful collaborations with non-Malta-based businesses. That, to me, is the foundation of genuinely successful internationalisation," says TradeMalta CEO Tania Brown. "We aim to steer our internal policies, incentives and strategy in ways that meet businesses' requirements while remaining fully in line with EU directives and regulations. Companies from different sectors can come together, join the dots and unlock areas of collaboration that neither could access alone," she adds.



Malta Freeport Terminal serves as a major Mediterranean logistics hub, connecting key trade routes between Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East. Photo: Shutterstock

INTERVIEW

George Gr
CEO, Malta Enterpri



Malta Enterprise is the country's economic development agency, tasked with attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) and supporting the expansion of existing operations. Here, CEO George Gregory outlines its role as a partner to investors and its focus on higher-value, diversified growth.

Q: How does Malta Enterprise support investor engagement?
Investing in another country inevitably involves navigating unfamiliar systems, institutions and regulations. Malta Enterprise can play an important role in making that journey clearer and more efficient. We are not there simply to promote Malta; we are there to understand what an investor is trying to achieve and help identify the right opportunities, partners and support mechanisms.
The UK is an especially important market for Malta. Our ambition is to deepen that relationship. I want an investor to feel that, when they engage with Malta Enterprise, they are dealing with a professional organisation that understands international business, responds quickly and remains a partner beyond the initial investment decision.

"We want to attract companies that bring new capabilities, knowledge, technology and international networks to Malta."

Q: What is your strategy to continue growing inward investment?
Malta's FDI performance reflects the continued confidence of international investors in the country. We are seeing opportunities in a broader range of sectors; our focus at Malta Enterprise is increasingly on diversification and value creation. We want to attract companies that bring new capabilities, knowledge, technology and international networks to Malta, while also creating opportunities for Maltese businesses to participate in their supply chains.

As published in The Guardian

FENECH & FENECH ADVOCATES

The first call for investing in Malta

Malta's largest and most diversified law firm offers UK businesses a one-stop shop for entering the islands – and the wider EU.

Q: How has the firm evolved under your leadership?
During my tenure, a key priority has been the transition from a successful family-owned law firm into a modern professional services organisation which continues to be a leader in Malta across virtually every area relevant to international business. Malta's economy has supported that trajectory, driven by strong performance across tourism, financial services, maritime, aviation, technology, iGaming, pharmaceuticals and, more recently, digital businesses including e-payment services, online banking and crypto. My focus remains rooted in a simple principle: preserving the values we have carried since 1891, while ensuring we continue to meet the needs of an increasingly sophisticated international clientele.



Nicolai Vella Falzon, *Managing Partner, Fenech & Fenech Advocates*

"We are not merely legal advisers; we help businesses understand how Malta's regulatory landscape can support their broader strategic objectives."

Q: What is Fenech & Fenech's unique proposition for UK partners?
I want UK investors to look at the firm as a trusted gateway to Malta and, by extension, to the EU. We are not merely legal advisers; we help businesses understand how Malta's regulatory landscape can support their broader strategic objectives. Part of our offering is Fenlex, a fully licensed corporate services provider. Working together, Fenech & Fenech and Fenlex offer a genuine one-stop-shop solution to clients coming here, from the moment they consider establishing a presence on the island.

Q: How is innovation creating new opportunities for the firm, and what edge does this give your clients?
From the client's perspective, innovation is creating entirely new industries and business models. Areas such as artificial intelligence, digital assets, crypto assets, fintech and other emerging technologies present novel legal and regulatory challenges that require specialised expertise. Our advantage lies in combining a strong financial services regulatory team with a genuinely technical IT law practice.
From an internal perspective, I can say with confidence that Fenech & Fenech is ahead of peers in so far as technology is concerned. We see AI as an enabler and are building our own AI agents and are developing proprietary tools, built on a well-resourced and fully controlled data stack, which ensures unique and accurate output. Long-term, we intend to develop products we can license to clients. Within the next five years, we hope to be in a position to offer certain legal services in a fundamentally different manner to the way they are offered today.

FENECH · FENECH ADVOCATES

www.fenechlaw.com

FOCUS ON **THE CONVENIENCE SHOP HOLDING PLC**



David Tabone, *CEO, The Convenience Shop Holding plc*

The Convenience Shop operates Malta's largest network of retail stores, now unified under two brands: MyConvenience neighbourhood stores and MySupermarket outlets for larger, planned shops. "What truly defines us is how deeply embedded we are in the communities we serve," says CEO David Tabone. "We are present in over 50 communities across Malta and Gozo, and we are part and parcel of each and every one of them."
With 106 outlets in total and a wealth of product and customer data, the Group is working closely with UK and international partners in digital engagement, loyalty and automation to build a more personalised customer experience.

MySupermarket MyConvenience My www.my.mt

A bridge to Europe and bey

Malta's openness to trade continues to evolve in step with its economy.

Few economies are as open to the world as Malta's. International trade is worth around 219%[1] of GDP, one of the highest ratios anywhere, and the country is a net exporter of services – a reflection of the strength of its knowledge-based sectors. That openness has long been shaped by Malta's location at the heart of the Mediterranean – one that, for Christopher Fearne, the country's minister for foreign and European affairs and trade, will continue to define its outlook. "The Mediterranean should not remain a barrier between Europe and Africa," he says. "It should be a bridge, and our foreign policy has long been oriented towards building a more integrated Mediterranean region."



"Britain remains an important partner for us in trade, and that relationship continues to evolve."

Christopher Fearne, *Minister of Foreign and European Affairs and Trade*

Equally important in shaping Malta's commercial stance are its ties with the UK. Trade between the two countries surged by 39.6% year on year to the end of the first quarter of 2026, driven largely by a rise in services, which account for 87% of the total. UK exports to Malta rose by 53.9% to £3.4 billion over the period, with a 72.7% increase in UK services exports driving much of that growth[2]. "We have a long-standing commercial relationship that has diversified significantly over the years," says Fearne. "Britain remains an important partner for us in trade, and that relationship continues to evolve."

Policy moves in Brussels point to closer engagement still. As the EU moves towards a 'Buy European' approach that favours goods with significant production inside the bloc, an EU base becomes increasingly valuable for British companies seeking access to the European market. By establishing production facilities in Malta, companies can help products to meet EU-origin requirements. At the same time, Malta offers a platform for expansion beyond Europe, with the government actively encouraging joint ventures between Maltese and foreign companies to target growing markets across the Middle East and Africa. "The possibilities there are almost endless," says Fearne.

TRADEMALTA

Bringing **Malta's businesses to the world**

TradeMalta is helping Maltese firms go global – with UK collaborations high on the agenda.

For a decade, TradeMalta has helped Malta-based companies expand overseas. Under CEO Tania Brown, the public-private partnership's work carries ever-greater significance: global disruption has reinforced the importance of sea-based supply chains, making Malta's position between Europe, Africa and the Middle East a key strength – and a platform for opportunity. "It is essential for us to build new collaborations and partnerships – not transactional, point-to-point trade activities, but deeper, more enduring alliances," says Brown. Alongside trade missions, TradeMalta offers co-funding for internationalisation costs, from trade fairs to market research.

The UK is a priority. Brown's first trade mission took in Liverpool, Wrexham and Cardiff – regional economies seen as underserved by international partnerships – with a second, to Scotland and the north-west, planned for 2027. "There is a clear appetite among UK businesses and partners to form new collaborations, particularly with European member states," she says. Areas of alignment include knowledge-based services, technology, life sciences, renewables and water management. "For Maltese businesses to grow, they must look outward, and internationalisation enables companies to grow beyond the limitations of our domestic market."

TRADEMALTA

www.trademalta.org



"There is a clear appetite among UK businesses and partners to form new collaborations."

Tania Brown
CEO, TradeMalta

Sources: [1] World Bank, 'Trade (% of GDP) – Malta', World Development Indicators, 2026; [2] Department for Business and Trade, Malta Trade and Investment Factsheet, 24 September 2026.

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As published in The Guardian

Malta forges ahead by land, sea and air

From expanding airport capacity to upgrading its ports, Malta is investing in the infrastructure and services that underpin its economic ambition.





1. Valletta Bus Terminus enhances land connectivity and public transit across Malta. 2. Malta International Airport in Luqa, which handled over 10 million passenger movements in 2025. Photos: Shutterstock

Malta's diversified economy depends on moving people and goods quickly and reliably. Manufacturers in sectors from semiconductors to pharmaceuticals rely on efficient supply chains, while tourism and the services economy depend on easy access for visitors and businesses alike. That's reflected in the country's focus on connectivity and the priority afforded to land, sea and air links. "Our connectivity is strong," says Leonid McKay, CEO of Transport Malta. "Direct flights now connect Malta to the US, we are minutes from Sicily and an hour from Rome."

In 2025, Malta International Airport handled more than 10 million passenger movements for the first time.

At sea, the Malta Freeport remains one of the Mediterranean's leading transshipment hubs, handling more than 2.8 million twenty-foot equivalent units in 2025 and serving more than 110 ports worldwide – over 50 of them in the Mediterranean. An expansion now under way will allow it to handle ships carrying up to 23,000 containers – part of a wider programme of port investment aligned with Vision 2050, which also includes a shore-to-ship power supply at the Grand Harbour to cut emissions from vessels at berth.

Air connectivity has also expanded rapidly. In 2025, Malta International Airport handled more than 10 million passenger movements for the first time, a rise of 12.3% on the previous year, with direct routes to more than 100 destinations. The airport is now investing €345 million over five years to expand capacity and upgrade its facilities.

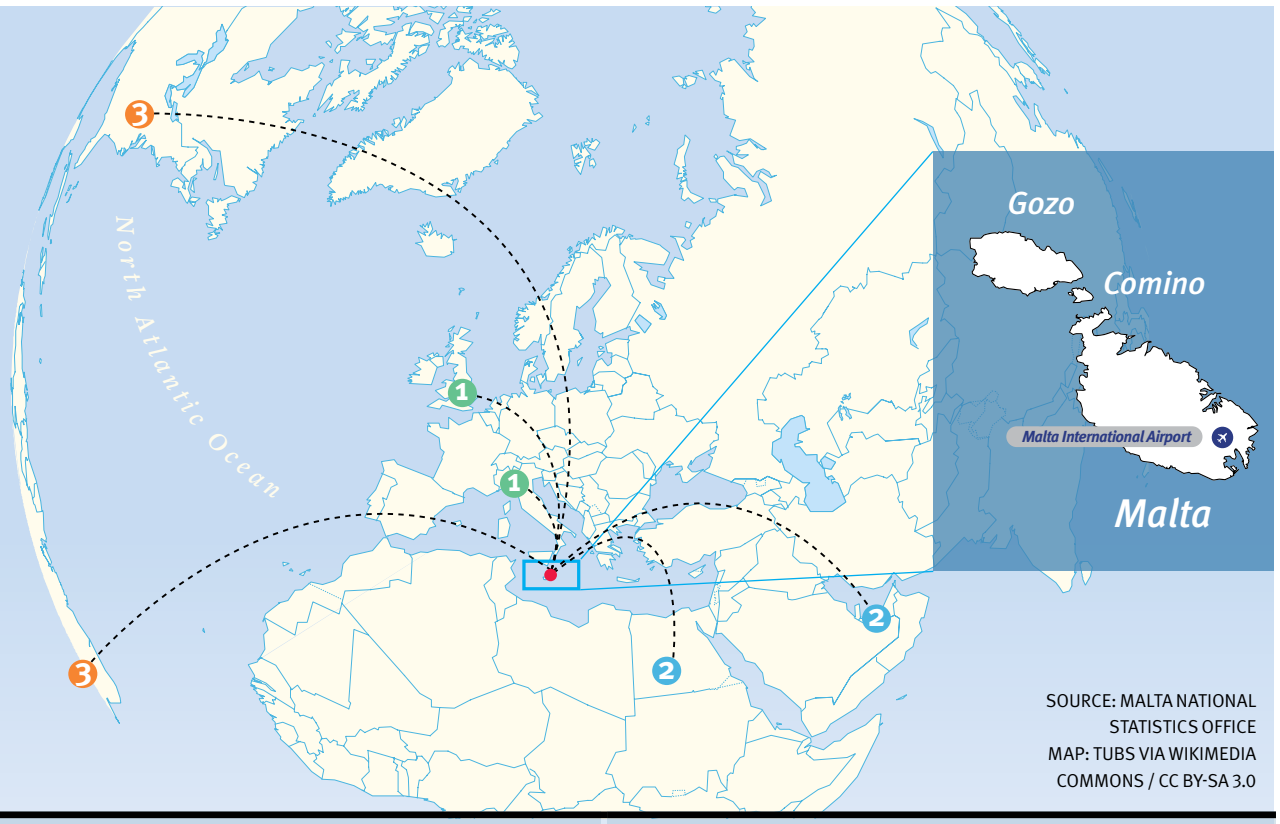
Around that infrastructure, Malta has built a substantial aviation services cluster. Aircraft registration, maintenance, repair and overhaul and aircraft leasing have all developed a strong presence on the islands, with international names such as Lufthansa Technik investing in new capacity – creating high-value jobs and reinforcing Malta's position as a hub for the wider aviation industry.

MALTESE CONNECTION

Providing critical infrastructure, connectivity, and services across all transportation modes to link Malta globally.

GLOBAL AIR CONNECTIVITY

1. **Europe - The Primary Hub**
   Italy (Over 2.04 million passenger movements) and United Kingdom (Over 1.74 million passenger movements) as top individual destinations.
2. **Africa and Asia / Middle East - Regional Connections**
   Key strategic hubs connecting Malta to North Africa (e.g., Cairo, Tunis) and major Middle East transit gateways (e.g., Dubai, Doha).
3. **North & South America (Transatlantic Reach)**
   Represents Malta's long-haul reach and global connectivity, including charter flights, business jets, and transatlantic routes.



SOURCE: MALTA NATIONAL STATISTICS OFFICE
MAP: TUBS VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS / CC BY-SA 3.0

LAND (Public & Eco-Friendly Transport)

- **75.7 Million Passenger Trips**
  ALL-TIME RECORD FOR PUBLIC TRANSPORT.
- **100% Fully Electrified**
  PUBLIC BUS FLEET OPERATING ON GOZO ISLAND.
- **517 Scheduled Buses**
  OVER 207,000 DAILY TRIPS ACROSS MALTA & GOZO.

SEA (Ports & Merchant Shipping)

- **10,008 Registered Vessels**
  EUROPE'S LARGEST MARITIME FLAG REGISTER.
- **978,011 Cruise Passengers**
  HOSTED ACROSS 396 PORT CALLS.
- **64 MVA** ONSHORE POWER SUPPLY (SHORE-TO-SHIP) CAPACITY INTRODUCED TO DECARBONISE COMMERCIAL PORTS.

AIR (Civil Aviation)

- **900+ Aircraft**
  ON THE MALTESE AIRCRAFT REGISTER.
- **76 International Air Services Agreements**
  EXPANDING GLOBAL REACH.
- **€22 Million Investment**
  LUFTHANSA TECHNIK'S NEW HANGAR BRINGS BOEING 787 DREAMLINER CABIN MODIFICATIONS TO MALTA

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At a crossroads: Malta's role as a **key Mediterranean transport hub**

Photo: Transport Malta

Malta boasts Europe's largest ship registry by tonnage – one of several factors behind its status as a regional hub for connectivity. Now Transport Malta is balancing domestic needs with the island's international footprint.

The rapid pace of change in Malta is creating challenges and opportunities alike for Transport Malta, the authority responsible for land, maritime and air transport. With a fast-growing economy, accelerating urbanisation and a surging tourism sector, the task is to ensure that transport systems evolve in tandem, while delivering for the population of a compact island nation. "This authority is not simply about infrastructure; it is about connecting people," says CEO Leonid McKay. "The focus must be human, not just concrete."

The rapid pace of change in Malta is creating challenges and opportunities alike for Transport Malta.

That focus is the first of four key lessons that have shaped McKay's strategy since taking office. The second is the reality that, on an island of Malta's scale, land, sea and air routes are interconnected; what happens on the roads affects the ports, and what happens in aviation affects the entire network. Third is that services must be demand-responsive while still honouring social responsibilities to older people, those with disabilities and those without vehicles. And fourth is that public safety is central to the authority's remit, emphasised by recent legislation to cap hours for ride-hailing drivers.

Those lessons are being put into practice through Malta in Motion, a programme of investment in public transport, infrastructure and sustainable mobility. "Malta in Motion is not a plan for the next 15 years. Malta in Motion is now," says McKay. Gozo's bus fleet has already been fully electrified, with Malta's fleet due to follow by 2030. Alongside decarbonisation initiatives at ports, the plan also focuses on expanding transport options, with new fast ferry routes linking Valletta with Sliema, Mġarr and Buġibba introduced in recent months, and a drive to integrate e-scooters, buses, ferries and cycling into a single ecosystem.



Malta's expanding aircraft registry strengthens global reach and supports national carriers like KM Malta Airlines.

"This authority is not simply about infrastructure; it is about connecting people."

Leonid McKay
CEO, Transport Malta

This momentum creates synergies for UK-based partners. Malta's ship registry counts more than 10,000 vessels, including over 1,000 superyachts, and is whitelisted under the Paris and Tokyo memorandums of understanding. In addition, an EU-approved tonnage tax regime offers vessel operators genuine predictability. "Malta is the natural EU platform for UK-based investors," says McKay, "and Transport Malta is their natural partner within it."



Decarbonising public transport remains a core priority under Transport Malta's long-term mobility vision.

tm

www.transport.gov.mt

Q&A



Leonid McKay
CEO, Transport Malta

Q: How do you want Transport Malta to be perceived by UK partners?
We stand for success. Let me give you two specific examples. First, the Malta Ship Registry is the largest in Europe and the sixth largest globally. We are also leaders in superyachting. The Malta Ship Registry is the flag of confidence for operators worldwide. Our aircraft register, meanwhile, has grown by 500% over the past decade, with more than 950 aircraft currently registered.
We are highly responsive. We do not compromise on safety standards. We are an open authority, forward-looking and committed to ease of doing business. Our shared language and legal traditions with the UK, and our position at the centre of the Mediterranean, make Malta a natural destination for UK investment.

"Malta's EU membership gives UK investors a direct platform into European maritime and aviation markets."

Q: Which specific opportunities should UK investors consider?
There are several distinct opportunities worth highlighting. The first is the sheer diversity of our register – bulk vessels, tankers, containers, specialised vessels and superyachts all sit within it. That breadth is a strength.
Second is our international reputation, which we have invested in consistently. We also benefit from a highly advanced professional ecosystem of lawyers, surveyors, naval architects and classification societies. And Malta's EU membership gives UK investors a direct platform into European maritime and aviation markets.

As published in The Guardian

TA' PINU - GOZO

Explore more *culture*

VisitMalta