



## Malta 2016 Crime & Safety Report

Travel Health and Safety; Transportation Security; Stolen items; Theft; Assault; Fraud; Cyber; Floods; Maritime; Drug Trafficking; Financial Security; Burglary

Europe > Malta; Europe > Malta > Valletta

2/9/2016

### Overall Crime and Safety Situation

Post Crime Rating: Medium

### Crime Threats

Crime rates are comparatively lower than those in most other first-world countries. Analysis shows the upward trend in crime reports sustained from 2009 to 2013 has peaked and slightly reversed course in 2014, the latest year for which complete statistics are available.

Theft remains the predominant criminal offense, comprising 58 percent of all offenses. Thefts, however, saw a reduction of 270 offences from 2013, sustaining a drop two years in a row.

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Assaults (including homicides) average 1,052 cases per year or three incidents per day (average 2004-2013). This statistic has been relatively consistent year-to-year, with 990 incidents in 2014.

Fraud decreased from 2013, averaging below one case per day.

Prostitution showed a marked increase from 48 cases in 2013 to 123 cases in 2014.

#### Cybersecurity Issues

Computer-related crime has experienced a decrease of nine percent from 2013 to 2014. However, cyber-related crime experienced a significant rise from a decade ago, going up from 10 cases in 2004 to 250 in 2012.

#### Other Areas of Concern

Paceville, the densely populated nightclub and restaurant scene, is known for excessive alcohol consumption and heavy-handed tactics of nightclub “bouncers.” Isolated incidents have been reported by foreign visitors who have been injured as a result. There have also been reported incidents of “spiked drinks” leading to theft and assault. The Embassy recommends club visitors not leave drinks unattended, be aware of their belongings,

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especially smartphones, at all times and avoid confrontations by departing the area should an issue present itself.

## Transportation-Safety Situation

### Road Safety and Road Conditions

Road conditions vary significantly depending on their usage, illumination, state of repair, narrow alleys, and inexperienced/irresponsible drivers but are generally fair to good. One should exercise caution, however, while traveling on older roads, particularly in smaller villages. Road conditions can and do deteriorate quickly even with small amounts of rain, creating slippery conditions. Many roads also experience washouts during heavy rains. Consequently, minor and major traffic accidents occur frequently on many roadways, and delays can last hours.

Road construction and road wear also present unique safety challenges. Most secondary roads are pocked and marred by potholes. Vegetation can grow up to and over the edge of the road, particularly during the rainy season, causing a lack of visibility on bends and concealing hazards at the side of the road. Secondary roadways are almost always ringed by stone walls, some of which reach great height and may limit a driver's field of vision.

The leading causes of motor vehicle and pedestrian accidents involving U.S. citizens are driver error (unfamiliar road signs, unusual driving customs/courtesies) and pedestrian hazards. Driver error can be directly attributed to unfamiliarity with right-side drive vehicles

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and practices as well as simple confusion by motorists driving in a foreign country. For example, double parking is illegal, but the practice is an everyday occurrence on most streets. It is common for lane traffic to stop abruptly when a delivery truck parks in a travel lane to unload cargo or when a driver places their car in reverse to reach a street-side parking space. Thus, motorists must remain alert and attentive, even when driving in seemingly well-moving traffic. Traffic enforcement practices are lax, and the resulting road culture reflects a more cavalier attitude often resulting in “fender benders” and sometimes serious accidents.

Right-of-way and so-called yield laws are similar to those in rural U.S. cities but can seem awkward and confusing for drivers accustomed to driving in larger metropolitan areas, particularly at roundabouts. Unless you are traveling on a priority road, vehicles coming from the directional right have the right-of-way.

The average speed limit is 60 kph (~35 mph) but drops to 30 kph in most residential areas. There are speed cameras, designated by a pictograph of a camera, throughout the island.

Drivers who are involved in traffic accidents should attempt to exchange insurance information with the other party and summon a traffic warden. Local law does not require that operators involved in a road traffic accident remain at the scene until police arrive to make a report if there is no personal injury or if the parameters of the accident are agreed upon by the drivers. This is especially the case in simple front-to-rear end collisions, where it is not expected the police will need to come to the scene. Drivers (and rental cars) are required to carry a “front-to-rear” collision form in their vehicle that can be obtained from the website of most local insurance companies.

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Talking or texting on a cell phone while driving is illegal and highly inadvisable

When driving, keep your doors locked and your windows up. Thieves snatch valuables through open car windows. Do not leave any valuables visible in the passenger compartment. Be aware of your surroundings when leaving or entering your residence and at traffic lights and stop signs. Leave enough space between your vehicle and the vehicle in front of you to create an escape route, especially at traffic lights and stop signs. Do not get out of your car if there are suspicious looking persons nearby; instead, drive away. Be suspicious of anyone who hails you or tries to get your attention while you are in or near your car. Do not pick up hitchhikers and wear your safety belts whenever travelling. Carry a cell phone with you and have emergency numbers readily available.

### Public Transportation Conditions

The most common form of mass transportation is bus. Although the fleet of buses is new, schedules are somewhat unreliable, and bus drivers drive aggressively and have been involved in multiple accidents.

### Aviation/Airport Conditions

Malta International Airport is the only airport in Malta and serves the whole Maltese Islands. It is located between Luqa and Gudja and serves as the main hub for Air Malta and a base for Ryanair and several other European carriers.

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General inquiries - +356 2124 9600

Flight Information - +356 5004 3333

Passenger Services Department - +356 2369 6144/6000

Baggage Services - +356 2369 6063/4

Luggage (24 hours) - +356 2369 6012/6120

Airport Police Station - +356 2122 2942; +356 2369 6396

## **Terrorism Threat**

Post Terrorism Rating: Low

Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns

Terrorism is a worldwide threat. The Department of State remains concerned about the continued threat of terrorist attacks, demonstrations, and other violent actions against U.S. citizens and interests overseas. There is a continuing threat in Europe from persons planning attacks inspired by major terrorist organizations but conducted on an individual basis. There were no acts of indigenous or regional terrorism in Malta in 2015. Terrorists may use a variety

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of means and weapons to target official or private interests. U.S. citizens are reminded of the potential for terrorist attacks against public transportation systems and other tourist infrastructures and should take every precaution to be aware of their surroundings and to adopt appropriate safety measures to protect themselves while traveling. Exercise particular caution at holiday festivals or events. U.S. citizens should also monitor media and local information sources and factor updated information into personal travel plans and activities.

The U.S. continues to work closely with European allies on the threat from international terrorism, including ISIS and al-Qa'ida. Information is routinely shared between the U.S. and its key partners in order to disrupt terrorist plotting, identify, take action against potential operatives, and strengthen defenses against potential threats.

## **Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence**

Post Political Violence Rating: Low

Post-specific Concerns

Environmental Hazards

The most common environmental hazard is heavy rain and flash flooding of low-lying roads, which may become impassable with 30-45 centimeters (12-18 in) or more of standing water.

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Typically, roads are not well drained. Flooding has been known to impact key infrastructure (emergency services, communications, utilities). To avoid flash flooding:

Do not attempt to drive through a flooded road. The depth of water is not always obvious. The road bed may be washed out under the water, and you could be stranded or trapped.

Do not drive around a barricade. Barricades are there for your protection.

Do not take short cuts. They may be blocked. Remain on designated evacuation routes or roads.

Be cautious at night when it is harder to recognize flood dangers. Six inches of water will reach the bottom of most passenger cars, causing loss of control and possible stalling.

30 centimeters (12 in) of water will float many vehicles.

60 centimeters (24 in) of rushing water can carry away most vehicles, including sport utility vehicles.

## Drug-related Crimes

Illegal drugs, particularly cocaine, heroin, ecstasy, and marijuana, are available. The sale and distribution of these and other drugs often occurs near/around nightclubs. While drug-related activity does not usually affect American tourists or business travelers, Americans should be aware that Malta has the same types of drug-related crime as those encountered in any major U.S. city.

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The government has made it a priority to arrest and prosecute offenders; persons caught trafficking narcotics can expect severe penalties and lengthy pre-trial confinement (up to or exceeding two years) if a contested trial is expected. Drug offenses decreased slightly from 208 in 2013 to 192 in 2014. Foreign defendants are considered a flight risk and are rarely granted bail.

## **Police Response**

### How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment

While incidents of police detention or harassment have been reported, they are not common. Should an encounter with police occur, respect and cooperation are the best ways to avoid problems. Should such incidents occur, do not do anything (physical resistance, attempts to flee) that could put personal safety at risk. U.S. citizens are advised to call American Citizens Services at the U.S. Embassy at +356-2561-4000.

### Crime Victim Assistance

American tourists are encouraged to contact the local police (112 nationwide) if they are involved in an accident or become the victim of a crime and to contact the U.S. Embassy's American Citizen Services for assistance. Authorities often contact the U.S. Embassy regarding incidents involving American tourists.

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Police: 112 or 191

Fire: 112 or 199

Ambulance: 112 or 196

U.S. Embassy Switchboard (24/7): +356-2561-4000

#### Police/Security Agencies

The Malta Police Force (MPF) is the only law enforcement agency in the country. The MPF is broken into several divisions that include: Administration, Criminal investigations, Drugs, Vice/Economic Crime, Protective Services, Special Branch, Forensic Science Laboratory, and Community Policing. The police force is divided into 13 districts: 12 in Malta and one in Gozo. While the MPF is responsible for internal security, maintaining law and order, and enforcing the law, they may be assisted by the Armed Forces of Malta if requested. The appointed Police Commissioner is under the supervision of the Minister for Home Affairs and National Security.

The Armed Forces of Malta are responsible for external defense, with an emphasis on protecting the country's territorial waters and airspace. The Commander of the Armed Forces is also under the supervision of the Minister for Home Affairs and National Security.

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## Medical Emergencies

The fire department and ambulance service may be reached by dialing 112. Medical facilities are above average and generally offer the standard of care available in most developed countries. There are medical clinic facilities available that provide limited, basic medical treatment and several major hospitals that offer comprehensive medical treatment.

Pharmacies carry most prescription drugs. Many drugs are available without a prescription. However, plan accordingly and bring your needed prescriptions with you.

### Contact Information for Recommended Hospitals/Clinics

Mater Dei is a public general hospital and the most advanced in Malta. Located in Birkirkara, the Emergency Room is open 24-hours and provides medical transportation via ambulance and helicopter.

Mater Dei Hospital

Triq Dun Karm

Msida, Malta

+356 2545 4040

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St. James is a private hospital located on Gorg Borg Oliver Street in the Sliema district and offers a complete set of medical services to include 24-hour emergency and ambulance services.

St. James Hospital

Triq Gorg Borg Olivier

Tas-Sliema, Malta

+356 2133 5235

Floriana Health Center (Clinic)

Triq Frangisk Saver Fenech

Il-Fijurana, Malta

+356 2124 4340

Available Air Ambulance Services

Medilink: +356 2278 5785

Air Ambulance Services: +356 2369 6276

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## Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance

For additional information on vaccines and health guidance, please visit the CDC at: <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/malta>.

## OSAC Country Council Information

Regional Security Officers (RSOs) are located in Ta'Qali to assist OSAC constituents (OSACMalta@state.gov). To reach OSAC's Europe team, please email OSACEUR@state.gov.

## U.S. Embassy Location and Contact Information

### Embassy Address and Hours of Operation

United States Embassy Valletta

Ta'Qali National Park

Attard, ATD 4000

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## Malta

Opening Hours: 8:00 am until 4:30 pm, closed on American and Maltese holidays

For Consular hours and appointments, please visit the Consular Section Website:  
<http://malta.usembassy.gov/contact-information-and-opening-hours.html>.

## Embassy Contact Numbers

Embassy Operator: +356-2561-4000

RSO, Consular, and Foreign Commercial Service (FCS) personnel can be reached through the Embassy number at all times.

Marine Post One: +356-2561-4150

The Embassy has a duty officer on call during non-business hours. Contact the telephone operator or Marine Security Guard if assistance is required. An operator is available on a 24/7 basis.

Website: <http://malta.usembassy.gov/>

## Embassy Guidance

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The Department of State website (<http://travel.state.gov>) provides access to all U.S. Embassy websites, as well as travel warnings and security alerts.

## **Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim**

### Situational Awareness Best Practices

All U.S. visitors to Malta should be aware of their local security situation and take appropriate steps to bolster their personal security.

Victims of street crime are often inattentive targets of opportunity. Be alert and aware of your surroundings. Women should keep purses zipped and in front of them. Keep your money, credit cards, wallet, and other valuables in your front pockets. Wear the shoulder straps of bags across your chest. Avoid ostentatious displays of wealth and maintain a low profile. Theft of cell phones, computers, money, jewelry, and iPods is common. Visitors should keep these items out of sight and only use them in safe locations. Should you be confronted by an armed individual immediately comply, avoid making sudden movements, and do not offer any form of resistance. Any hesitation on your part could be perceived as a threat, which may result in unnecessary violence. If you are the victim of a robbery, do not resist. Give up your valuables and do not make any sudden or unexpected movements.

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Visitors should avoid walking outside alone at night. Try to seem purposeful when you move about.

It is advisable to exercise caution when using any ATM. Avoid ATMs in dark, remote, or isolated locations. Attempt to use ATMs inside shopping malls, hotels, and banks since they are normally high-traffic areas and are monitored by security guards and cameras. Before approaching the ATM, scan the area for any suspicious persons or activity. Should anyone approach you while you are withdrawing money, immediately cancel the transaction and leave the area. Should you encounter issues while using the ATM, never accept "assistance" from a "Good Samaritan." Avoid the vicinity of an ATM when it is being serviced. Scan the ATM for any odd or out-of-place device (especially around the area of the card reader), an altered keypad, etc.

Persons living in Malta are strongly encouraged to upgrade security at their residences to reduce their vulnerability to residential crime. Intrusion alarms, solid perimeter barriers, perimeter lighting, telephone intercom system, and window and door grilles are all part of a comprehensive residential security program.

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