



Travel Information for April 2008 R8 Committee in Malta

Malta adopted the Euro on 1st January 2008. Previously the currency was the Maltese Lira, which had an exchange rate of 0.429 Lira = 1 €. Prices are required to be listed in Liri until June 2008 so you will see both currencies displayed.

The Hotel for the IEEE meeting is Le Meridien St.Julians, which is a new 5 star hotel situated on the seafront of Balluta Bay, contact details as follows:

39 Main Street, Balluta Bay, St Julians, STJ 15 ☎ (356) 2311 0000 Fax (356) 2311 0001
Le Meridien is part of the Starwood Hotels Group
St Julians is 8 km from the capital of Malta, Valletta, but there are regular buses, with a journey time of 30 to 45 minutes. Bus numbers 62, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 671 cover this route.

The IEEE rate for the hotel is expected to be 105/129 € for single/double room, respectively. This includes taxes and breakfast. The hotel offers the *same* rates to any IEEE members who want to stay for extra days at their own expense but *ONLY* if they make the reservation at least 30 days in advance. If you make a reservation for such extra days direct with the hotel, you might get a better rate.

There are no good sandy beaches in or near St. Julians, but there are rocky costal areas good for snorkelling, etc. Care is needed to find places where it is easy to climb out of the sea, and sharp rocks and sea urchins provide a risk of cuts on the feet.



coastline at Zurrieq



Valletta



Air Malta travels from London, Manchester, Paris, Amsterdam, Rome, Milan, etc.

Other airlines which may have inexpensive fares include Ryanair and German Wings. GB Airways (previously owned by British Airways) used to have cheap flights between London and Malta, but was sold to Easyjet in December 2007 – and Easyjet now flies to Malta from London Gatwick, leaving very early.

Travel from the Airport: Taxis in Malta are white, and do not have meters, so the price has to be agreed in advance with the driver. However, from the airport, there is a fixed official tariff and a pre-paid voucher should be purchased from the taxi ticket booth in the airport before seeking a taxi. The cost to St. Julians should not be more than 8 Liri, e.g. 16€. If you do not buy a voucher, the taxi driver is likely to charge you more, probably much more.

The hotel offers a bookable limousine service to and from the hotel.

There are regular buses between the airport and Valletta, but not to St. Julians.

Malta has a large fleet of buses, in the past most were old and of a type which you might expect to see in a museum. Most buses are owned by their drivers. They operate to a comprehensive timetable, and are the most convenient way to travel around Malta. On a typical day, some 250 buses are in service around Malta.



All buses on the main island of Malta are yellow with a horizontal red stripe; do not expect air conditioning or comfortable seats and do not stand by the door because it may be left open during the journey. To travel on these famous buses is an essential part of the Malta experience, but they are increasingly being replaced by more conventional modern buses. The bus network is a star centred on Valletta, so wherever you want to go, you will usually need to travel to Valletta and change bus there.

Malta has some of the oldest known relics of human civilisation – with remains of buildings from at least 2000 years before the start of the known Egyptian civilisation. The Skorba temples near Mgarr date back to 5000 BC.

The Maltese language (Malti) is in the Semitic family (which includes Hebrew and Arabic) but English is almost universally spoken and is one of the two official languages. Note that **ġ** and **ż** are ‘soft’ versions of **g** and **z**, and **h** is silent except when written as **ħ**. **gh** is silent, but lengthens the preceding or following vowel, and **q** is a glottal stop.



Red arrow shows hotel location

In 1530, Malta was given by the Spanish Emperor to the Knights of the Order of St John of Jerusalem. A 3-month siege by the Turks in 1565 was survived and the Knights governed until a 1798 invasion by Napoleon. The Maltese expelled Napoleon, with assistance by the British Navy, and in 1814 Malta became a British colony and an important strategic naval base between Europe and North Africa. During World War II, Malta was subjected to a long blockade and five months of intensive bombing by Italy, protected by only three ancient biplanes (nicknamed Faith, Hope and Charity). Despite devastation, Malta did not surrender, and in recognition of this, the island was awarded the George Cross by the British in 1942. This cross forms part of the Malta flag and other Maltese insignia.

Tony Davies