



Tourism performance in Malta for the year 2004

According to National Statistics Office (NSO) data, total tourist departures for the year 2004, amounted to 1,156,028, 97% of which came to Malta by air. This represents an increase of 37,791 tourist departures over the same period last year. Three in every four tourists visited Malta between the months of April to October. Employment trends (full-time) in the past years in hotels and catering establishments have been stable. The latest employment figures in hotel and catering establishments indicate a decrease from 9,505 jobs in August 2003 to 9,323 for the same period in 2004.

Like in the past years, the main source market for Malta was the United Kingdom with a share of 39 per cent of total tourist departures. In 2004 the German market, Malta's second major tourist originating market, showed signs of recovery over 2003, the latter having been one of the negative years for German tourist levels to Malta. The German market, which accounted for approximately 12 per cent of all tourist departures, increased by 8 per cent. Other markets which recorded increases in tourist departures included the French, Italian, Belgian, Scandinavian, Swiss, Russian and the United States.

It is estimated that during the year 2004, the number of nights spent in the Maltese Islands by tourists departing by air amounted to a total of 10,973,396, a drop of 1.3 per cent over the same period in the year 2003. Tourist departing by air stayed in Malta for an average of 9.7 nights, approximately one night less when compared to 2003.

NSO data show that total tourist expenditure in 2004 increased by approximately Lm 2.5 million when compared to 2003, however total per capita expenditure decreased from Lm 197.30 in 2003 to Lm 191.70 in 2004. In 2004 per capita expenditure was lower when compared to previous year for both package and non-package tourists. Tour operator packages characterise travel to Malta, whilst about one fourth of tourism to Malta is through direct bookings. The ratio of package to non-package tourists is 3:1.

Holiday/Vacation was the main purpose of visit for over 80 per cent of tourist departures whilst 86,945 came to Malta for business related reasons (NSO).

Tourist profile surveys conducted by MTA's Strategic Planning and Research Division show that Malta's selling point is the novelty of the destination combined with its rich and diverse history and culture experienced in a warm climate.

The island of Gozo is a specific component of the tourism product offered by the Maltese Islands. Its situation is characterised by its island nature which presents some facets which are, to a certain extent different from Malta. Gozo also offers a unique type of self-catering accommodation through its farmhouses which generally attracts the up-market segment of international tourism. Tourist Surveys conducted by the Malta Tourism Authority indicate that approximately 65 per cent of tourist visited Gozo during their stay on the Maltese Islands. Tourism in Gozo is characterized by a heavy flow of foreign day-trippers, who opt for an excursion on the island during their stay in Malta. However Gozo is visited by an increasing number of foreigners who

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opt for a lengthier stay. It is estimated that around 4% of total tourist air departures opt for at least an overnight stay in Gozo.

The internet is used as a source of information by a significant share of tourists who visited Malta in 2004. Approximately 30% of German and French tourists who visited Malta in Summer 2004, booked their trip or elements of it through the internet. Such bookings could have been done through agents' websites or directly to airlines, accommodation establishments and car hire companies. The internet was used to a lesser extent by British (over 20%) and Italian (over 10%) visitors to Malta for the same period.

Research conducted by the Strategic Planning and Research Division within MTA illustrates the importance of improving the infrastructure supporting the industry in terms of preservation, presentation and management of sites and natural environment. Major causes of complaints are associated with the quality of facilities and services within the industry. The tourism industry in Malta has to continuously seek to provide a positive experience to the tourists. Recommendation by friends and relatives is one of the strongest influential factors why tourists choose to come here. By providing good facilities, services and experiences to the tourists, we can work towards ensuring prosperity in tourism activity in the future.

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