

Subject: Malta: the Jewel of the Med

Read the questions about Malta and see how many you can answer without listening to the mp3 recording of the text. Then listen to the recording and try to answer the remaining questions.

Introduction

- What are the Maltese people like?
- What is likely to be the greatest disappointment while visiting Malta?

Day and Knight

- What is Malta known for?
- Which troops attacked Malta in 1565?
- What is the name of the capital city of Malta? Why was it given this name?

Imperial Order

- When did Malta become part of the British Empire?
- What are the signs of former British rule?
- What happened between 1940 and 1942?
- What happened to the Polish battleship?

Tongue Twisters

- What are the country's official languages?
- Where do English teachers working on Malta come from?
- What kind of courses are offered?

Planning Ahead

- What does FELTOM stand for?
- What are festas?

Listen to the text again and fill in the gaps.

The first signs of life on Malta – pottery shards – A)..... to 5,200 BC, when Sicilian farmers likely settled on the B)..... islands. Since then, the ever-growing population has been under a variety of masters, including the Arabs, French, Italians and British. To a greater or lesser C)....., all have left their mark on the islands and its peoples.

Tourists visiting the islands for the first time might have a D)..... of false expectations. Perhaps the biggest disappointment is the relatively small E).....of sandy beaches, since rocky shores are much more commonplace. But F).....invariably fall head over heels with the Maltese people's openness, warmth and love for life.

It's not that life has always been easy for the inhabitants of the islands. Because of its strategic importance as a military and G)..... base, several nations have long battled over this speck of land, a mere 316km². Over the centuries these have H)..... the Phoenicians (who wanted the islands as a base for their trade in purple fabrics), various clans of Arabs (who regularly looted the islands), and Napoleon's French troops (who requested safe harbour in the main port and then proceeded to turn the cannons on their I).....).

Day and Knight

Malta is perhaps best known for the Knights of Malta, officially the Order of Saint John. The island was given to them in 1530 by the King of J)..... when the Hospitaller Order needed a permanent home. The Knights quickly set about fortifying the island with several bastions and forts. In 1565 Ottoman forces K)..... the island, starting what would go down in history as the Great Siege of Malta. Around 30,000 Turkish L)..... attacked the island between May and September of that year. The Knights who, together with Maltese fighters and a few M)..... slaves, numbered just around 7,000, fought a valiant battle. A mixture of weak Ottoman communication, and decisive fighting by the Knights' forces N)..... by Grandmaster Jean Parisot de Vallette, saw the enemy retreat towards Constantinople on September 11.

With the island and the infant fortifications in shambles, the Order set about building a new city on a peninsula which would be a stronghold against any future attack. It was O)..... by thick walls and a P)....., and designed to be as self-sufficient as possible. Named after the general who had defended the island during the Ottoman siege, it acts as the capital city to this very day – Valletta.