



## for a fabulous fencing holiday

sponsored in the UK by [www.salago.co.uk](http://www.salago.co.uk)

### **The Malta Open 2008 June 21/22nd 2008** **Individual and Team - Men's and Women's Foil and Epee** and depending upon support, perhaps individual sabre

#### **Information - General**

Malta comprises three principal islands, Malta itself (approx 15 x12 miles), and to the North West a smaller isle, Gozo (7 miles x 4) and in between the two, the smallest of the three, Comino (1.75x1). The Capital of Malta is Valetta, which is bordered on the seaward side by the famous harbours that once formed the base for the Royal Navy. The recommended accommodation is in the town of Bugibba and is around 7 miles from and to the west of Valetta.

The competitions are held in what was formerly a military Hospital, and which has now been converted to accommodation, small shops and a sports hall. The airport is Luga (4m miles from Valetta and 9 miles from Bugibba). In June the average temperature is 73F with a daily high of 81F. The sports hall in which we fence is not air conditioned but there is usually a pleasant flow of air through the space from some very large windows.

Electricity (for shavers/hairdryers/travel irons etc) is the same as the UK and converters are not required.

#### **Accommodation and flights**

We leave it to each entrant to make their arrangements on accommodation and flights. Our recommendations are that you book through the airline Malta Direct or the new budget service offered by Ryan Air that flies from Luton.

Apart from flights, Malta Direct have package deals on offer that include accommodation and transfer to and from the airport. It has been our custom to stay in Bugibba and our favourite hotel has the Hotel Santana. There are plenty of other hotels in Bugibba and last year while we were spread around a bit, those of us who wanted to meet up for the evening or plan a trip for the next day, had an understanding that we gather each evening in the bar of the Hotel Santana at 7.30pm

For a self catering alternative, a short distance away from the Hotel Santana are the Winston Holiday Apartments. The Winston offers a swimming pool with a pleasant outdoor leisure area. The rooms though are not air-conditioned but this is reflected in the price. If booking at the Winston, you will need a flight only.

Obviously, you are free to book any accommodation that you fancy but from the logistical viewpoint of clubbing together for transport to and from the competition (and for day trips), it makes good sense to try to book somewhere in the locality of Bugibba.

Contact numbers:

#### **For Malta Direct**

tel: 020 8561 9079 – ask Joe Gaucchi and mention fencing.  
Fax: 020 8573 6520 or to book on line [www.maltdirect.com](http://www.maltdirect.com)

#### **For Ryan Air**

Book on line [www.ryanair.com](http://www.ryanair.com) **For Hotel Santana** 00 356 21583451 [www.santanahotel.com](http://www.santanahotel.com)

**For the Winston Apartments** – international call – tel: 00 356 21572039 fax: 00 356 21577419  
web: [www.mol.net.mt/winston](http://www.mol.net.mt/winston)

Flights by Malta Direct are possible from 14 different airports. Most of us are flying out on the Thursday prior to the Competition and staying for 7, 10 or 14 days. Depending on from where you are flying and the accommodation you chose cost per person £275 to £380 for 7 days, £350 to £390 for 10 days, and £395 to £450 for 14 days.

#### **Finance**

Although Malta is part of the EU, the currency is still the Lira and the exchange is around 0.6 Liras to the £1. Visa and MasterCard are generally accepted and there is a 'hole in the wall' near the Holiday Complex that spews forth cash at the

command of a card. If you are changing cash, this is best done in Malta, but beware of banks and it is wise to shop around to find the best deal.

## **Food**

Food is well priced and when eating out, a set 3-course meal with wine should be available for around £7 to £9. In supermarkets you will find most of the brands with which we are familiar, but if you have any special preferences for health foods, e.g. museli, it could be a good idea to take some with you. There is an abundance of fresh fruit that has been ripened in the sun and the Maltese wine is quite palatable.

## **Car Hire and Transport**

Closed vehicles or open topped jeeps are available and when shared between four, make an economical way of getting about. We particularly recommend Matlock Car Rental who has offices just around the corner from the Hotel Santana. Matlock also have a few pedal bikes available. The roads are appalling and often without lane markings. Public transport by bus (including some antiquated ones – 1940's touch) is cheap and an experience not to be missed. A car ferry operates between Malta and Gozo and again is very reasonably priced.

## **Places to visit and trips**

**In Valleta**        The Grand Harbour and Barraca Gardens  
National War Museum  
Archbishop's Palace  
The Wartime Experience  
National Museum of Fine Art  
Palace Armoury

### **In Medina and Rabat**

Archbishop's Palace  
Roman Villa  
St Paul's Grotto  
St Paul's Catacombs  
The Medina Experience  
St Agatha's Catacombs

**In Gozo**         The Cathedral Museum and Armoury  
Natural Science Museum  
Bishop's Palace

### **In the middle of Nowhere**

Popeye Village  
Prehistoric Temples  
Salt Pans  
The Blue Grotto

There are lots of day trips by boat around the islands. If you wish to go further afield, a hydrofoil trip to Sicily is possible with a coach tour to the active volcano, Mt Etna. Plenty of nightclub life, but buses do not operate in the evenings. Taxi will be required but make sure you agree a price before starting the journey.

## **Walks and other Activities**

At a guess around 50% of the island is developed. Once though you are clear of the Urban Areas, there are attractive walks around the coastline and through the largely cultivated countryside. For some parts walking boots makes the going easier. Other activities include scuba diving, windsurfing and fishing (if you are keen why not slip a rod in with your swords?)

## **The Fencing**

2008 will be the eleventh year that this competition has been run. While initially the Brits had little difficulty in coming home with all the trophies (which by British standards are very generous), over the years the standard of fencing has improved tremendously and if you wish to come home with a gold you will have to work hard. Their style is a bit different from what we would experience in a British National Open and this in itself can add interest to the competition. Foil is usually held on the Saturday and the Epee on the Sunday and assuming enough entrants we will also fit in individual sabre. Depending on numbers, the format – 2 rounds of pools then DE. The competitions qualify for UK ranking points.

The Maltese are very hospitable and we are invariably invited along to their club night and sometimes have a social event together.

## **Entering the Competition**

Entries are acceptable right up to a few days before the event. Entry fees are paid in Malta but it is helpful in planning the event, if an entry form can be sent to Jim Pilkington, 64 Fern Road, Newton Abbot (tel: 01803 865721, fax 01803 866981, email [jim@salago.co.uk](mailto:jim@salago.co.uk)) as soon as you have decided to book your flight and accommodation. Non-fencers are very welcome.