

A South African's guide to moving to and making it in Malta: A table of economies

By  Marcus 'The Maltese Falcon' Brewster

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July's 30 degree-plus temperatures and long sunny days mark the advent of the Mediterranean summer season and herald the arrival of Malta's 2.3 million tourists (that's a 17% increase on the previous year's number and five times our 460,000 population).

South Africans visiting the Maltese Islands for the first time (and especially those on the wrong end of a weaker rand) will profit from the following budget tips. Here are seven hacks to make your euro stretch further.

Although those in self-catering accommodation will find the cost of food in supermarkets here only marginally more than back home, Maltese restaurant prices are in line with the whole of Europe and are considerably more expensive than in SA.



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Salads are surprisingly not the cheapest option on the Maltese menu. That honour is held by the pizza and pasta dishes (Maltese cuisine is heavily influenced by our Italian island neighbour Sicily less than 100km north of our shores). Whereas a pizza might be in the €6-€10 range (R90-R150), a salad is likely to be in the €8-€12 range (R120-R180).

Salmon is not a premium-priced protein here and is an everyday **fish** in Malta. There is little difference in price between a tuna and a salmon salad.

Although it's acceptable practice in SA restaurants to ask for **tap water**, Maltese restaurateurs will look uncomprehendingly at you. Because of the high lime content of our water (filtered through the many layers of limestone, which is the figurative bedrock and the literal building stone of the island), tap water on the archipelago is an acquired taste. The Maltese themselves all order bottled water when they go out, although most have reverse osmosis filtration systems at home for domestic consumption.

Most supermarkets and even convenience stores reward customers with free six-packs of water (the larger hypermarket equivalents with their own house brand) according to how much you spend at the till.

Average restaurant beverage prices are: small water (€1,20 = R18), tea (€1,50 = R22,50), café latte (€2 = R30), a pint of Cisk, the local beer (€4 = R60).

On a budget? **The band club** is your best bet. In every village and generally in the most prominent building on the town square, you will find a band club. (Tip: look for the flagpole on the roof).

The band club is a source of community pride so the property's ornate façade will be matched by an immaculately maintained and gleaming marble interior. The club is an attraction in itself as you are likely to see archival photos of the village over the generations, as well as notable moments from the neighbourhood festivals (called *festas*).

Here is where you will meet the locals and save money (tea: 50 cents = R7,50). Food won't extend much beyond cheese and tomato sandwiches, but there's no cheaper place to sit in air-conditioned splendour for a snack or midday nibble.

Similar budget-friendly venues are the village **labour or nationalist political party clubs** (although they are nowhere near as grand and look like working men's clubs inside), **bocci clubhouses** (where you are likely to get expanded menus, including wraps and salads) and the village **kiosks**. These are generally on a piazza and serve no frills/no fuss burgers and various take-away options.



Pastizz © viewingmalta.com | Malta Tourism Authority

If you're feeling peckish and are not worried about your cholesterol levels, then the local snack to try is the **pastizz**. Imagine a savoury pastry with a pie filling of either mushy peas or ricotta – best washed down with the island's proprietary soft drink, Kinnie, which tastes like Campari.

Tiping in restaurants: although 10% would be a South African norm, it's not the case in Malta. Most locals only round up their bill or leave the small change. Tip jars on counters only ever have copper coinage in them.

ABOUT MARCUS 'THE MALTESE FALCON' BREWSTER

marcusbrewster is a brand synonymous with PR excellence in SA. An industry innovator, leader, and inspiration, Brewster affiliated his multi-award winning boutique firm with larger Level 1 BBBEE marketing/comms agency MediaRevolution for scale in 2016 and went on to launch Marcus Brewster International in Europe the following year. Marcus currently lives on - and actively promotes - the Mediterranean island of Malta. For African, S. African and European PR enquiries, contact marcus@marcusbrewster.com or WhatsApp on (+356) 9931 3322

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