

# Summer Well Set In & The Heat Is On

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Summer arrived. Locals began to go near the sea to recreate themselves, while a large number of tourists have joined us in filling our coasts with human bodies. Regretfully, this is not the only way we try to fill the Mediterranean Sea.

Sandy beaches have become full of sun loving humans. Sadly, some still do not understand the need to protect the environment. Ice cream wrappers, food containers and plastic bottles are left stranded on the beach. Is it too difficult to be kind to nature? After all, the beaches are used recreatively by humans. We should not degrade their quality for future generations.

The Maltese Islands have a coast which stretches for approximately 180Km, of which 137Km belong solely to the island of Malta. The coast is made up of high cliffs, rocky shores and sandy inlets. Malta is in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea, which is the world's largest inland sea. It's length is about 4,025Km, its average width 805Km, and its area about 2,965,500 sq Km. The greatest depth, 5,092m, is in the Matapan Trench of the Ionian Basin. The Mediterranean is linked to the Atlantic Ocean by the Strait of Gibraltar, to the Black Sea by the Turkish Straits, and to the Red Sea by the Suez Canal which was completed in 1869. Tides are minimal in the Mediterranean. In the Maltese Islands, the difference the tide makes to the sea level is about 15cm.

The variety of climates, water depths, salinity and land forms in the Mediterranean Sea has produced a variety of flora and fauna, both in the sea and on its shores. More than 400 species of fish are found in the sea, along with shellfish, corals, sponges and seaweeds. The total quantity, however, is not particularly large because of the low level

of phytoplankton production in the warm water.

If you decide to spend a day, (or night!) recreating yourself with your family or friends near the seaside, remember to take the plastic bottles, ice cream wrappers and other materials you use back home, so they may be disposed of intelligently. Teach your children likewise, by practicing cleanliness yourself.

Another area of concern are barbeques, which are a very common occurrence on the seashore, sometimes being large family affairs complete with electricity generators. The subsequent mess of tins, garbage and sometimes the smell of burning plastic and rubber (thrown in the fire by young ones... parents please note, the gases produced are harmful!) all add to degrade the quality of our coastline.

Concern has been expressed that the Mediterranean may be 'dying' due to pollution, most of which comes from municipal and industrial wastes on the European shore. The problem is intensified by rapid industrialisation and by increased use of the sea for the transport of petroleum and petroleum products. Pollutants have closed many beaches and hurt the tourist industry, which is economically important. While international efforts to control pollution have begun, many fear that delays and struggles among various industrial and national interests will render ineffectual any action taken.

Finally, have a good day at the Maltese coast, bathing in the Mediterranean Sea. Remember that the sea has to be shared and used by other people and all sorts of animals and plants. The latter use it to 'live in', not just to 'have fun in'.

