

A South African's guide to moving to and making it in Malta: People who need people

By  Marcus 'The Maltese Falcon' Brewster

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One of the advantages of living on the other side of the equator to South Africa is that it gives you a different perspective - on everything! Just as the night sky occasions different names for constellations and astronomical phenomena according to which hemisphere you view them from, so I was led to look at a recent report about population density through the other end of the telescope.



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Atlasandboots.com did the heavy lifting in ranking 237 nations from least densely populated to most (table below). If you subscribe to Sartre's dictum that hell is other people, then consider relocating to Antarctica, Greenland, Svalbard or the Falklands, as each of these boast a population density of less than 1 person per km².

As a benchmark, South Africa sits at position #73 in terms of least densely populated, clocking in at 44.99 persons per km².

Reading backwards

But when I flipped the list around to read it backwards, i.e. the most crowded places in the world, I found it made for much more interesting reading – and that Malta is one of the top 10 most densely populated countries on the map.

Starting with the least elbow-room, Macau has a staggering population density of 21,346.42 pax per km². The next three positions went to Monaco (15,322.5), Singapore (8,188.16) and Hong Kong (6,490.53). Apart from not offering much room to swing a cat, these jurisdictions are notable for their high property prices, indicating some sort of demand-supply correlation.



A South African's guide to moving to and making it in Malta: A cottage for sale

Marcus 'The Maltese Falcon' Brewster 21 Sep 2018



From the midway position in the top 10 most densely populated, we are under 5,000 people per km², with positions #5, #6 and #7 going to surprise candidates Gaza Strip (4,986.62), Gibraltar (4,522.46) and the Holy See/Vatican City (2,272.73).

At position #8, Bahrain is sub-2,000 people with a density of 1,856.5 population per km².

The next slots are both archipelagos with parity densities: at #9 the Maldives (1,317.82) and at #10 Malta (1,317.53). The island similarities continue with #11 being Bermuda (1,312.3).

Island sandwich

Much as it's very seductive to picture Malta sandwiched between the Maldives and Bermuda (neither of which I visualise as being particularly crowded), the Maltese situation may be more open to interpretation than these rankings would suggest.

To whit: Malta has something called ODZ (Outside Development Zone) land. Unlike Monaco, which is unrelievedly high-rise apartment blocks, Malta has a lot of undeveloped land, which is mostly zoned for agriculture. Being an island nation, Malta historically had to be as self-sufficient as possible regarding food security, although nowadays we are a net importer.

I raise the issue of zoning because 70% of Malta is ODZ, meaning outside the town and villages, Malta is countryside. If you own a farm, you can't just decide to build a shopping centre, a townhouse development or a petrol station!



The reference to petrol stations is not fatuous – there are about a dozen Planning Authority applications for large forecourts on ODZ land, which on paper make no sense to me.

As an example, an ODZ application on the outskirts of our village of Zejtun was refused last month.

Firstly, there are four existing fuel stations within one kilometre, so convenience or filling-a-gap-in-the-market is not a consideration.

Secondly, Malta is part of the EU, which has defined targets for the phasing out of emission producing engines and the adoption of cleaner/greener transport (electric cars, etc).

These would-be forecourt developers must have their eye on another prize altogether because within the next decade we won't be permitted to drive cars that require filling up with petrol any longer.

Speed of change

In closing, we all know about the inevitability of change. But it's somewhat sobering to be reminded of its speed.

It was put to me that it took up till 1950 to develop the first 10% of the Maltese islands.

By the year 2000 – within 50 years – Malta had reached 20% development.

The next 10% happened in a third of that time – in only 17 years Malta had achieved its 30% coverage rate.

Avanti!



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The least densely populated countries (and dependent territories) based on the number of people per km2, according to atlasandboots.com:

LEAST	MOST	COUNTRY	POPULATION DENSITY
1	237	Antarctica	0
2	236	Greenland	0.03
3	235	Svalbard	0.04
4	234	Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas)	0.26
5	233	Pitcairn Islands	1.15
6	232	Mongolia	1.96
7	231	Western Sahara	2.27
8	230	Australia	3

9	229	Namibia	3.01
10	228	Iceland	3.3
11	227	Guyana	3.43
12	226	Canada	3.57
13	225	Suriname	3.61
14	224	Mauritania	3.65
15	223	Libya	3.78
16	222	Botswana	3.81
17	221	Niue	6.22
18	220	Gabon	6.62
19	219	Kazakhstan	6.81
20	218	Russia	8.32
21	217	Central African Republic	9.03
22	216	Chad	9.4
23	215	Bolivia	10.14
24	214	Turkmenistan	10.96
25	213	Oman	11.06
26	212	Saudi Arabia	13.29
27	211	Mali	14.42
28	210	Congo, Republic of the	14.49
29	209	Papua New Guinea	14.93
30	208	New Caledonia	15.02
31	207	Niger	15.19
32	206	Belize	15.69
33	205	Argentina	15.93
34	204	Finland	16.32
35	203	Christmas Island	16.33
36	202	Norway	16.43
37	201	New Zealand	16.78
38	200	Paraguay	17.07
39	199	Algeria	17.2
40	198	Somalia	17.3
41	197	Uruguay	19.07
42	196	Bhutan	19.75
43	195	Saint Helena	19.87
44	194	Sudan	20.06
45	193	South Sudan	20.22
46	192	Sweden	22.12
47	191	Solomon Islands	22.41
48	190	Saint Pierre and Miquelon	22.86
49	189	Vanuatu	23.2
50	188	Angola	23.51
51	187	Chile	23.53
52	186	Bahamas, The	23.77
53	185	Peru	24.15
54	184	Brazil	24.35
55	183	Estonia	27.67
56	182	Equatorial Guinea	27.75
57	181	Kyrgyzstan	28.95
58	180	Laos	30.1
59	179	Latvia	30.11
60	178	United States	33.22
61	177	Mozambique	33.24
62	176	Venezuela	34.32
63	175	Zimbabwe	35.33
64	174	Congo, Democratic Republic of the	35.53
65	173	Faroe Islands	36.42
66	172	Djibouti	37.3
67	171	Cook Islands	39.36

68	170	Colombia	41.88
69	169	Liberia	42.1
70	168	Cocos (Keeling) Islands	42.57
71	167	Madagascar	42.68
72	166	Lithuania	43.24
73	165	South Africa	44.99
74	164	Belarus	46
75	163	Nicaragua	46.22
76	162	Montenegro	46.52
77	161	Palau	46.69
78	160	Norfolk Island	48.56
79	159	Guinea-Bissau	49.61
80	158	Panama	49.76
81	157	Iran	49.76
82	156	Eritrea	50.33
83	155	Fiji	50.4
84	154	Guinea	50.49
85	153	Montserrat	51.88
86	152	Afghanistan	52.32
87	151	Cameroon	52.57
88	150	Yemen	53.1
89	149	Turks and Caicos Islands	55.45
90	148	Virgin Islands	56.16
91	147	Tanzania	56.95
92	146	Ecuador	57.45
93	145	Tajikistan	58.77
94	144	Mexico	63.42
95	143	Bulgaria	64.05
96	142	Lesotho	64.5
97	141	Uzbekistan	66.49
98	140	French Polynesia	69.09
99	139	Tunisia	69.7
100	138	Georgia	70.68
101	137	Samoa	70.68
102	136	Ireland	71.31
103	135	United Arab Emirates	72.64
104	134	Ukraine	72.96
105	133	Burkina Faso	73.33
106	132	Senegal	74.56
107	131	Cote d'Ivoire	75
108	130	Bosnia and Herzegovina	75.32
109	129	Croatia	75.84
110	128	Morocco	76.11
111	127	Brunei	76.95
112	126	Honduras	80.64
113	125	Burma	81.47
114	124	Greece	81.61
115	123	Macedonia	81.82
116	122	Kenya	82.04
117	121	Swaziland	84.49
118	120	Sierra Leone	85.91
119	119	East Timor	86.82
120	118	Iraq	89.41
121	117	Cambodia	89.51
122	116	Romania	90.31
123	115	Serbia	91.79
124	114	Malaysia	95.14
125	113	Ethiopia	95.4
126	112	Costa Rica	96.48

127	111	Spain	96.88
128	110	Egypt	96.9
129	109	Slovenia	97.28
130	108	Syria	97.36
131	107	Benin	98.02
132	106	Dominica	98.4
133	105	Cuba	100.55
134	104	Armenia	102.38
135	103	Moldova	102.63
136	102	Turkey	103.18
137	101	France	104.23
138	100	Austria	104.38
139	99	Hungary	105.89
140	98	Albania	106.02
141	97	Tokelau	107.08
142	96	Wallis and Futuna	110.66
143	95	Slovakia	111.06
144	94	Northern Mariana Islands	112.64
145	93	Jordan	114.71
146	92	Azerbaijan	115.03
147	91	Ghana	115.29
148	90	Portugal	117.71
149	89	Poland	123.05
150	88	Denmark	130.09
151	87	Thailand	133.33
152	86	Kiribati	133.35
153	85	Czech Republic	135
154	84	Indonesia	136.82
155	83	Cape Verde	139.08
156	82	Togo	140.27
157	81	Guatemala	141.99
158	80	Tonga	142.54
159	79	China	143.72
160	78	Micronesia, Federated States of	148.43
161	77	Isle of Man	155.27
162	76	Kuwait	161.38
163	75	Malawi	162.02
164	74	Uganda	164.17
165	73	Andorra	164.46
166	72	Kosovo	174.08
167	71	Gambia, The	181.54
168	70	Paracel Islands	185.81
169	69	Anguilla	187.77
170	68	Switzerland	199.54
171	67	Nepal	199.65
172	66	Qatar	199.75
173	65	Saint Kitts and Nevis	201.97
174	64	Italy	206.2
175	63	Nigeria	206.36
176	62	Seychelles	206.42
177	61	Sao Tome and Principe	208.53
178	60	Korea, North	209.46
179	59	Antigua and Barbuda	214.03
180	58	Dominican Republic	220.55
181	57	Cayman Islands	221.37
182	56	Germany	225.74
183	55	Luxembourg	229.75
184	54	British Virgin Islands	231.89
185	53	Trinidad and Tobago	237.56

186	52	Liechtenstein	239.02
187	51	Pakistan	257.41
188	50	American Samoa	258.81
189	49	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	262.44
190	48	United Kingdom	265.87
191	47	Saint Lucia	267.85
192	46	Jamaica	272.09
193	45	Saint Barthelemy	287.36
194	44	Vietnam	290.33
195	43	El Salvador	293.33
196	42	Guam	307.64
197	41	Grenada	324.78
198	40	Japan	334.6
199	39	Curacao	337.05
200	38	Sri Lanka	341.55
201	37	Philippines	347.52
202	36	Comoros	361.56
203	35	Puerto Rico	368.17
204	34	Belgium	376.42
205	33	Haiti	383.67
206	32	India	389.97
207	31	Israel	399.6
208	30	Netherlands	411.25
209	29	Marshall Islands	411.82
210	28	Burundi	412.03
211	27	Tuvalu	425.08
212	26	Rwanda	451.88
213	25	West Bank	468.93
214	24	Korea, South	513.25
215	23	Nauru	540.9
216	22	San Marino	549.79
217	21	Saint Martin	590.53
218	20	Lebanon	599.02
219	19	Aruba	639.56
220	18	Taiwan	653.37
221	17	Mauritius	664.9
222	16	Barbados	679.85
223	15	Jersey	852.07
224	14	Guernsey	852.59
225	13	Bangladesh	1063.09
226	12	Sint Maarten	1237.74
227	11	Bermuda	1312.3
228	10	Malta	1317.53
229	9	Maldives	1317.82
230	8	Bahrain	1856.5
231	7	Holy See (Vatican City)	2272.73
232	6	Gibraltar	4522.46
233	5	Gaza Strip	4986.62
234	4	Hong Kong	6490.53
235	3	Singapore	8188.16
236	2	Monaco	15322.5
237	1	Macau	21346.42

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