



Site Considerations: Proposed International Eco Research Center and Resort, Republic of Malta

Introduction

The client for this project is a North American corporation that manages one of the oldest and largest centers for ocean and earth science research, public service, and scholarly training in the world. Based in Southern California, the organization supports hundreds of ocean and earth scientists as they conduct research with the aid of oceanographic research vessels and shore-based laboratories. Under the guidance of an elite consortium of renowned universities and financially supported through ongoing commitments from multinational corporations, the institution has expanded its scope to include studies of the physics, chemistry, geology, biology, and climate of the Earth.



The client and project depicted here are hypothetical creations for purposes of demonstrating the techniques and tools used in Vectorworks software.

Seeking to enhance its role in environmental sciences research, the client is exploring the creation of a new international research facility that brings together the best minds in sustainable research and technology and where multidisciplinary teams can come together to learn and share. This proposed facility will help consolidate global energy and environmental efforts by providing a unique, scientific forum dedicated to collaboration and creative problem solving.

Inspired by TED Talks from TED Conferences, LLC, this International Eco Research Center will provide an environment that fosters the creation of lasting friendships and productive working relationships between participants as they focus their energies on solving many of the world's most challenging problems. Its casual, resort-like atmosphere allows researchers from around the world to build new friendships and share information in a comfortable, relaxing environment.

Site Considerations

An important early consideration for the project was to find a location that was directly accessible to major bodies of water, had a stable political environment, and had a climate that allowed year-round use. Additionally, it was important to the sponsors that the site be easily accessible internationally and not strongly affiliated with any particular G8 country. After considering several international venues, the island republic of Malta was ultimately selected.

As one of the world's smallest countries, Malta has a land mass that covers just 122 square miles. There are two official languages, English and Maltese, making this a good venue for international participants. Malta also is a strong tourist location, lending credibility to its appropriateness as a resort destination. As a small island country, it has excellent ground transportation to enable visits to local landmarks and city centers.

Malta has a long and distinguished history, and its Mediterranean location has contributed to its important, strategic value throughout history.

Pottery found by archaeologists in the town of Skorba closely resembles that found in Italy, suggesting that the Maltese islands were first settled in approximately 5200 BC. The large, stone temple structures on Malta are among the earliest in the world, constructed long before the pyramids were built in Egypt.

The site selected is located near excellent examples of early structures at Mnajdra, a temple complex on Malta's southern coast. These large limestone ruins, as well as other nearby sites, are now protected by fabric structures that shelter the stone from the destructive effects of increasingly acidic rain.



Touched by many cultures over the centuries, a succession of powers including the Phoenicians, Romans, Arabs, Normans, Spanish, French, and British have ruled this territory at one time or another. Maltese architecture includes some of the earliest known monolith-building civilizations tempered by the strong influences of multiple conquering nations, each seeking to imprint this strategic Mediterranean location with their own cultural style. Definitely Mediterranean in character, Malta initially resembles other locations in the region such as Crete, Sicily, and Greece.

Highly decorative mosaic floors, marble colonnades, and classical statues were introduced during the Roman period, and these decorative influences can be seen today in the colorful local architecture. European building styles were first introduced on a grand scale in Malta in the sixteenth century. These influences can also be seen today.

Architecture in Malta's British period succeeded in adapting English classicism to Malta's limestone to great effect, building beautiful public structures such as impressive schools and hospitals. Today's architecture in Malta often attempts to combine the local style with more modern building techniques and styles, though sometimes with inconsistent results. Limestone is still the preferred building material on Malta, giving the architecture its signature sepia tone coloration.





Malta's central Mediterranean location makes it an ideal location for hosting the Eco Research Center and Resort for a variety of reasons:

- From any point in Europe, flight times to the Malta International Airport are rarely more than three hours.
- Considerable ecological research is currently being conducted on the important waters of the Mediterranean.
- Weather conditions are relatively stable and tempered by the microclimate created by this large area of relatively warm water.
- There is direct large ship access into the Atlantic Ocean through the Strait of Gibraltar.
- The financial impact of this facility will positively influence this small republic more directly than if it were located in a large country, making local governmental participation more likely.
- As a tourist destination, the infrastructure to support the Eco Research Center's resort component is already in place.
- As a member of the European Union, Malta is politically stable.

The proposed site is located on the southern side of the main island and measures 15 hectares (37 acres) on a moderately sloped site adjacent to the Mediterranean Sea on the south side of Malta. It is very close to the International Airport, as well as the smaller and private Hal Far Airfield. Directly to the west of the site are important, prehistoric stone monolithic structures.

The site is steep and the new facility will have a commanding view of the Mediterranean. A new pier to access multiple research vessels will be incorporated into the planning. The design of the Eco Research Center and Resort should be contemporary yet maintain ties to the traditional building styles and locally sourced building materials that typify Maltese architecture.