



## **Gibraltar - where history and a modern finance centre meet**

One of world's famous landmarks and crossroads, synonymous with stability and durability, the Rock of Gibraltar has been a key strategic location for many centuries. Its long and varied history has given it an influence over world events out of all proportion to its size and population.

Gibraltar was a symbol of Moorish domination of the western Mediterranean from the 8<sup>th</sup> century until 1462 when it was taken by Spain. Britain captured the Rock in 1704 during the War of Spanish Succession and it has been a colony of the United Kingdom ever since.

Gibraltar has harboured successive waves of immigrants throughout its history from widely differing cultural backgrounds. The forefathers of much of the present population came from Genoa, Malta, Portugal and Ireland, in addition to Britain and Spain. The Rock therefore epitomises European diversity and a way of life that is, and will continue to be, British.

Successive British governments have re-affirmed the commitment enshrined in Gibraltar's constitution that no change can take place in the status of Gibraltar without the consent of the Gibraltarians.

Whilst Gibraltar is defined as a Crown Colony by its constitution, the last forty years have seen considerable advances in devolution so that the people of Gibraltar now have full internal self-government. The United Kingdom is responsible for defence, foreign affairs, financial stability and internal security. Gibraltar has its own parliament, consisting of a House of Assembly with fifteen elected members.

English is the official language but most Gibraltarians speak and write in both English and Spanish. Unlike some other offshore jurisdictions, the legal system is based exclusively on English common and statute law with variations introduced by local ordinances.

Gibraltar enjoys a special associate membership of the European Union which it joined with the UK in 1973. It implements EU directives, including those in the area of financial services.

Gibraltar has an international airport and harbour. Frequent flights into the UK's major airports cater for both the business and leisure traveller.