

A guide to the
MALDIVES

Once in a lifetime

Sea of stars, deep sea flights, treetop dining and beach bubble sleepovers

*Expert
top tips*

From packing to fast tracking, to finding the perfect resort, we've got everything covered

Mindful travel

Preserving the beauty of this fragile archipelago



CLASSIC COLLECTION



Welcome

Being a Maldives destination expert is not defined by how long you have been selling the destination but by experience and expertise. At Classic Collection Holidays we have highly trained travel experts, many of whom have been to the Maldives multiple times, who are ready to share their recommendations in order to design the perfect trip just for you.

It's been my good fortune to travel, for either business or pleasure, to this unique

destination more than fifty times. I know only too well how tricky it can be to select the perfect resort given that there is a choice of over one hundred hotels. Other considerations include whether to select a more remote atoll or one closer to the capital, a smaller or larger island, a transfer by seaplane or speedboat, a beach bungalow or an overwater villa. We are able to offer any island hotels as long as we are satisfied that they meet the necessary health and safety criteria and standards of customer service.

Customer satisfaction is at the heart of everything we do and we only work with selected partners who share that focus.

The purpose of this guide is to help choose the correct island resort for you, and to give an insight into this unique destination and the fantastic local partners and friends with whom we work.

We hope that you enjoy the guide, and we look forward to using our experience and expertise to help you make the right choices.



Alexandre Gavalda
Director Product & Commercial
Classic Collection Holidays

Choose Classic Collection Holidays because...

- » We excel in creating personalised luxury worldwide holidays and the Maldives represent the ultimate in luxury holiday escapes.
- » Our Maldives' experts have travelled there many times and can recommend options best suited to your needs.
- » We have the support of the best local teams to assist our customers in resort.
- » We source only quality and health and safety compliant properties.
- » Our prices are highly competitive.

...we know the Maldives.



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Why the Maldives?

This edge-of-the-world archipelago resembles most people's idea of paradise, and rightly so...

It's perhaps because of the Maldives' unique, away-from-it-all isolation that these beautiful islands regularly top the list of Forbes' Dream Destinations. With beaches of white sand perfection, luminescent turquoise waters and dazzling coral reefs, it's no wonder.

Each resort is its own private island and caters for every type of holidaymaker: couples, honeymooners, families, and groups of like-minded friends and every type of holiday: adventure, adrenalin,

romance and relaxation. Some resorts offer peerless luxury, others focus on charm, character and authenticity, but even the more modest properties will feature multiple dining options and spa facilities. All-inclusive options and meal plans allow full control of the budget.

Wherever you choose to stay customer service is universally excellent. Personalised greetings are delivered in beautifully spoken English from staff members who, owing to high staff to guest ratios, regularly

outnumber guests. While there's no shortage of overwater villas, stand-out experiences include underwater bedrooms with transparent walls, undersea restaurants for immersive dining with a view of marine life, and holistic spa treatments administered both over and under the water.

Beyond the resorts, superb water clarity affords some of the world's best diving and snorkelling. Coral walls dazzle, underwater caves delight, and you can mingle with brightly coloured tropical fish in waters so warm no wetsuit is required. There's no better place on earth to discover turtles, manta rays, and many species of shark including the magnificent whale shark.

Scenic sunset cruises, private luxury yacht charters for overnight sailing adventures, island hopping and seaplanes are some alternative ways of mitigating carefree holiday relaxation. Or try fishing from traditional Dhoni sailboats, enjoying cinema under the stars and observing the night sky from an island observatory.

With so much natural beauty to observe, indolence can feel remarkably guilt-free. This is a destination that specialises in extraordinary escapism and unrivalled relaxation. The best thing to do is just go with it and enjoy a uniquely unforgettable holiday of a lifetime.





When to go

Happily the Maldives is a year-round holiday destination. For hot, dry, sunny days the best time to visit is from January to April. Daytime temperatures are consistently around 31°C. Sun can be expected for between 6 and 9 hours a day. Water clarity for diving and snorkelling is excellent and the surfing season begins in March. Any showers should be short-lived. As this is peak season it's best to book early.

May to October are months when rain is more likely and there is a risk of storms, but the temperatures are still warm and there are usually long spells of bright sunshine. Plankton in the water may reduce visibility for divers, but it does attract manta rays and whale sharks from June to October. September and October are invariably

the wettest months, which is reflected in hotel prices, but are a good time to make the most of the resort facilities. November brings the wet season to a close and December is a popular choice for almost guaranteed winter sun, a fact that does not go unnoticed in the hotel prices.

Meteorological anomalies are not uncommon in a tropical island nation as widely dispersed as the Maldives and seasons do seem to be less predictable than they once were. Then again, a rainy day in paradise can be equally as memorable as a sunny one.

When it comes to hotel prices the peak season is Christmas and New Year and the months from November to April. For more affordable hotel rates consider travelling in the off-peak shoulder season which runs from



early May to late September, with May and June being the least expensive. Travelling in the shoulder season could mean more inclement weather but you can still catch some beautiful sunshine and, given the unpredictable nature of weather, just might prove to be a master-stroke.

The Maldives' climate

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Sunshine hours	6	6	6	6	6.5	7	7.5	9	8	9	8	9
Max temps	31°	31°	31°	31°	30°	29°	28°	29°	29°	30°	30°	31°
Min temps	23°	23°	23°	22°	20°	18°	16°	18°	20°	21°	21°	22°
Inches of rainfall	4	1	3	5	9	7	6	3	11	10	9	7

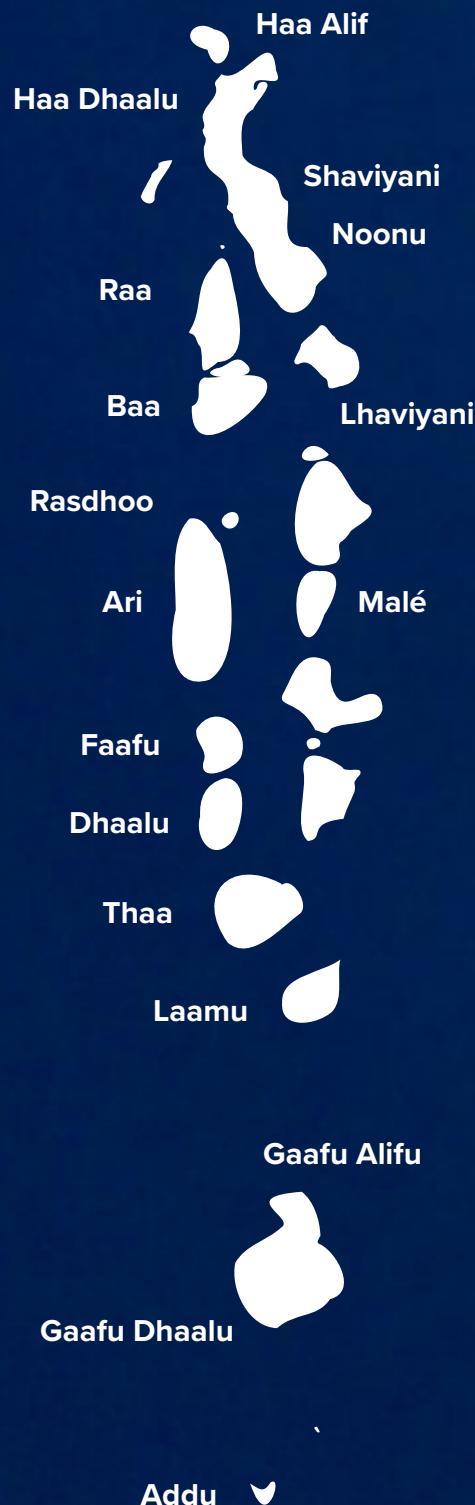
Your Atoll awaits

With so many atolls from which to choose, where do you begin? While it might be crucial for marine biologists to be able to distinguish the myriad minute differences between each atoll, for most holidaymakers matters are a little more straightforward.

Broadly speaking the more closely grouped islands of the northern atolls offer a more traditional Maldivian experience as they are the least developed region of the Maldives. Although there are fewer island resorts there is still huge diving and snorkelling potential, with shipwrecks to discover alongside manta ray feeding areas, diverse marine life, and a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve.



The southern atolls are less closely grouped together and give a greater feeling of isolation. Pristine dive sites are a major attraction. Many of the newer resorts have opened here and although they may be further from the capital there are good air links via several new airports.



Climate differs slightly too. The northern atolls are drier from January to April but suffer more from the monsoon between April and September with higher winds and humidity and rougher seas. Sharp showers and passing storms of an afternoon and evening are a feature of the southern atolls from October to December. Daytime temperatures are consistent: highs of 31°C and lows of 28°C, year-round throughout the region.

To make the selection process a little easier, here we concentrate on the atolls where we feature island resorts. Things to consider might be how far it is to travel to, and how long it will take to reach a chosen resort straight off a long-haul flight. Which mode of onward transport appeals most: domestic flight, seaplane or speedboat? What's happening and when? And how remote does any particular resort need to feel: is it a concern if other islands are visible, or is being completely surrounded by water a priority?

Here's a brief tour of our featured atolls from north to south with some resort suggestions. For a more comprehensive selection of resorts, as well as transfer details and transfer times, please refer to pages 40 and 41.

Haa Alifu

To the far north, this atoll's tropical landscape is largely untouched and uninhabited islands cry out to be visited. This atoll is home to some of the best fishing in the Maldives and world-class diving. *Suggested resort: JA Manafaru*

Haa Dhaalu

Located in the north, this atoll is a gateway to true Maldivian hospitality. The Barefoot Eco Hotel, on an inhabited island within the atoll, is located close to a local fishing and agricultural community. *Suggested resort: The Barefoot Eco Hotel*

Shaviyani

This atoll is one of the northern island groups and one of the least developed of all atolls in the Maldives. Shaviyani is your exquisite personal hideaway about 270km north of Malé. *Suggested resort: Fairmont Maldives Sirru Fen Fushi*

Noonu

This is the one of the most exclusive and luxurious atolls in the Maldives, home to Velaa Private Island and Soneva Jani luxury hotel. The biggest attraction for divers is grey reef sharks, leopard sharks and guitar sharks. *Suggested resort: Sun Siyam Iru Fushi*

Raa

This is one of the deepest atolls in the Maldives. Scuba divers delight in an abundant variety of reef fish, diverse marine life, overhangs, drop offs, and underwater caves. *Suggested resort: Joali*

Lhaviyani

North of Malé this popular atoll has both luxurious and more affordable resorts at different price points from which to choose. It's famous for its excellent divers' diving with access to numerous shipwrecks. *Suggested resorts: Komandoo Island Resort & Spa, Kuredu Island Resort & Spa*

Baa

North west of the capital Malé, Baa Atoll comprises 75 islands, 13 of which are inhabited and 17 of which have been developed into resorts. Known for luxury, unspoilt islands and marine life, this designated UNESCO Biosphere Reserve features incredible gatherings of manta rays and whale sharks at Hanifaru Bay. *Suggested resorts: Vakkaru Maldives, Coco Palm Dhuni Kolhu, Seaside Finolhu*

North Malé

This atoll's close proximity just to the north of Malé makes it a great option for those looking for shorter transfers and is particularly recommended for families. Diving and surfing are popular activities. *Suggested resorts: Huvafen Fushi Maldives, Baros Maldives*

Rasdhoov

A diving paradise, Rasdhoov atoll is 60 km west of Malé. It's a venue for spectacular marine life, vibrant reefs, warm waters and big fish encounters. *Suggested resorts: Veligandu Island Resort & Spa*

South Malé

Sibling atoll to the more developed North Malé Atoll and just as convenient for shorter transfer times, the South Malé Atoll boasts dive sites with shipwrecks and ideal snorkelling opportunities. *Suggested resort: Velassaru Maldives*

North Ari

This atoll has abundant marine life and is the best place to see whale sharks all year round. A degree of diving expertise is required to see the elusive hammerhead sharks here. *Suggested resort: Constance Halaveli Maldives*

South Ari

This Protected Marine Area remains one of the best places in the world to see whale sharks. Most of the islands are home to luxury resorts and boast impressive house reefs and rich marine life. *Suggested resorts: Diamonds Athuruga, LUX* South Ari Atoll Resort & Villas*

Faafu and Dhaalu

These secluded atolls are home to some of the most luxurious resort islands in the Maldives. They offer great surfing and skydiving and feature quite a few channels allowing long drift dives. *Suggested resorts: Kandima Maldives, Angsana Velavaru, Niyama Private Islands, Maldives, Filitheyo Island Resort*

Thaa

This is one of the least developed and most remote atolls. Known for diving and surfing, the surrounding nature, coral reefs and channels are largely unspoiled and unexplored. *Suggested resort: COMO Maalifushi*

Laamu

One of the most beautiful and untouched atolls, there are few resorts and plenty of deserted islands. The abundant seagrass meadows here make for larger sea turtles. The Ying Yang wave breaks just offshore and is a surfer's dream. *Suggested resort: Six Senses Laamu*

Gaafu Alifu

This barely developed southerly atoll is the largest in the Maldives and one of the most remote. Star gazing is superb this far south, nature abounds, and the cooler water temperatures give more colourful coral reefs. *Suggested resort: The Residence Maldives Falhumaafushi*

Gaafu Dhaalu

Located 50 km north of the equator, this atoll boasts magnificent diving sites, pristine natural features and excellent house reefs for snorkelling. *Suggested resorts: Amari Havodda Maldives, Ayada Maldives*

The northern atolls are more traditional, the southern atolls give a greater feeling of isolation

Mindful travel

This fragile archipelago is uniquely vulnerable to the effects of climate change; more than 80 percent of the islands stand less than one metre above sea level.

Preserving the beauty of the islands

To preserve the beauty of the Maldives for future generations many hotels have developed ecological initiatives in which they encourage local communities and guests to participate, inspiring people to travel in a more eco-friendly, sustainable way. At the vanguard of this movement is Soneva, a luxury hotel group which manages two private islands: **Soneva Fushi** in UNESCO listed Baa Atoll, and **Soneva Jani** in Noonu Atoll.

To eliminate imported plastic-bottled water, Soneva was an early adopter of desalination. Many resorts now feature their own desalination and water bottling plants. Desalinated water undergoes further filtration before being mineralised, chilled and served as still or sparkling water in recycled, sterilised glass bottles. The saving on importing bottled water and reductions in single use plastics have been dramatic.

Both Soneva Jani and Soneva Fushi source ingredients for their restaurants from their own kitchen gardens and mushroom caves. Soneva Jani's So Wild plant-based restaurant relies on drought-resistant vegetables and plants grown on-island. This is the same for Soneva Fushi's In the Garden restaurant. The menu here features sustainably caught fish and white meat.

As waste disposal is a major issue for the islands, Soneva has also pioneered waste to wealth centres. Waste is sorted into different categories and either recycled or repurposed into valuable products. Ketchup bottles make beautiful sculptures that are then sold at the island's art studio. Tin cans become door handles. Glass and cement become building blocks and Styrofoam is turned into surfboards.

The surfboards link into the Soneva Ocean Stewards' Programme which teaches local children how to swim so they can learn to surf and to snorkel in the hope that they'll explore the reef, understand its importance to marine life and tourism, and help to protect it.

Rising sea temperatures and increased UV light penetration cause coral bleaching, but the coral can recover. The award-winning conservation work by Anantara includes marine biologist-led coral regeneration programmes which have been in place for more than 10 years. Water conditions have improved, coral predators have been removed around Anantara's three South Malé atoll properties and super corals introduced. Anantara's best practice guidelines have been adopted by other resorts.



Gili Lankanfushi Maldives is one of the Maldives' most eco-conscious luxury resorts. Buildings are made from sustainable woods, and organic toiletries are dispensed from refillable earthenware containers. There's eco-friendly bedding and reef-safe sunscreen.

Their Coral Lines Project grows coral fragments in a rope nursery which are then transplanted back to the natural reef after they become mature colonies.

Their innovative Powered by Plants Programme introduces new plant-based menus and sweet vegan treats.

Classic Collection Holidays is keen to mitigate its environmental impact. We reduce, re-use and recycle. The paper used in our brochures is from sustainably managed forests and controlled sources. To offset the carbon emissions from staff flights, we contribute annually to The Travel Foundation who lead sustainability studies in tourism practices.

Getting involved with ecological initiatives

Anantara resorts offer guests the chance to dedicate part of their holiday time to attach fragments of rescued coral to ropes and mesh frames within the coral nurseries of **Anantara Dhigu Maldives Resort** and **Anantara Veli Maldives Resort** which has led to extraordinary coral growth. **Gili Lankanfushi Maldives'** coral regeneration programme has created 220 underwater coral lines which guests can sponsor.

Four Seasons Resort Maldives has some of the region's most ground-breaking ocean initiatives, including coral propagation, turtle and dolphin rehabilitation and manta ray research; guests can research manta rays, plant corals and participate in wildlife monitoring dives.

And as one is never too young to embrace sustainability, many resorts host some of the most imaginative and inspiring children's activities and programmes including dolphin trips

with marine biologists, presentations on turtles and manta rays, and coral adoption schemes.

These emerging eco-friendly practices are often a collaborative effort among the resorts and guests. They add an extra special dimension to a holiday to the Maldives and give hope for the future.



Gili Lankanfushi Maldives



Eco-friendly resorts and guest collaborations give hope for the future.

Anantara Kihavah Maldives Villas



The identifiable manta ray population of Laamu Atoll during 2020 was over 130 animals. Each manta can be identified by unique spot patterns on their underbelly. The atoll is home to two major cleaning stations where large numbers of mantas gather to be cleaned by reef fish. Insights into manta behaviour and habitat use is helped by remote underwater cameras and drone technology.

Sea turtle and manta ray conservation at Six Senses Laamu

Photo ID is not just for humans. In the Maldives photo ID for sea turtles has been in use since 2018 to help study the foraging and nesting sea turtle populations of Laamu Atoll. Sea turtles possess unique patterns of facial scales, similar to human fingerprints, which can be used very reliably to identify individual turtles. Identifying individual animals is important in understanding their ecology and behaviour, as well as providing estimates of population sizes for conservation efforts. Laamu Atoll, in 2020, had a population of identifiable turtles nearing six hundred.

Two species of turtle are frequently spotted at Laamu, green sea turtles and hawksbill. Gaadhoo, an uninhabited island 4.5km east of Six Senses Laamu, has long been identified as one of the most significant green sea turtle nesting spots in the Maldives. Six Senses is working hard to eliminate egg-poaching which remains an issue on Gaadhoo. The team also works to free turtles that become entangled and accidentally captured in abandoned fishing gear.

Six Senses Sustainability Funds

All Six Senses properties have Sustainability Funds which consist of 0.5% of total resort revenue, 50% of water sales, 100% of soft toy sales and any guest donations. The fund is invested annually in research, education and community projects. Fifty percent of water sales in all Six Senses Laamu's restaurant outlets goes into a fund providing clean, reliable drinking water to local communities in need. Globally, Six Senses' properties have a goal of becoming plastic free.





Four facts about sea turtles

1. During incubation warmer temperatures and darker beaches result in more female hatchlings, while cooler temperatures and lighter beaches favour males.
2. Some sea turtles are vegetarians: adult green ones survive on seagrass and algae.
3. Using slight variations in the magnetic field turtles can travel huge distances – some have recorded 12,000 mile round trips – but still return to the exact beach where they were born.
4. Unlike their land turtle relatives, sea turtles cannot retract their head and flippers into their shell.

Maldives' Underwater Initiative and Six Senses Laamu

The Maldives' Underwater Initiative is a multiple award-winning marine conservation exercise based at the 5 star **Six Senses Laamu** resort in the Laamu Atoll. Six Senses Laamu has long been dedicated to sustainability and marine conservation, and it provides a base, funding and the resources required for research and education of the wider community via the Maldives' Underwater Initiative team. The team works alongside the Manta Trust, Olive Ridley Project and Blue Marine Foundation which are partnership organisations involved in the study and conservation of manta rays and sea turtles, and in

the improvement of marine resource management.

Notable achievements during 2020 included the launch of a free online education programme for children around the world battling lockdown: a ten week Junior Marine Biology course with 99 beautifully entertaining and insightful videos. In addition, the most in-depth ever studies of Six Senses Laamu's seagrass meadows reef recovery were conducted. Also, sustainable fishing codes of conduct were signed with local communities, and no fewer than 14 raised beds were created to maximise food yield from the garden in preparation for the resort re-opening.

Six Senses Laamu Maldives



Arriving in Style

Images of Maldives may be very familiar, but there are important finer details about this South Asian island nation that will be helpful to you at the planning stage of a holiday.

Getting there

Between November and April British Airways will fly you direct to Malé from London, or enjoy regional departures with one stop from Birmingham, Dublin, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Manchester and Newcastle flying with the following airlines: Emirates, Etihad, Lufthansa, Qatar Airways, Sri Lankan Airways or Turkish Airlines.

Book Business Class with Emirates and chauffeur service in the UK is provided. Alternatively Classic offer the services of Tristar Worldwide chauffeurs. We can also book ACE Handling's VIP meet and greet service: a personal assistant to help at the airport. Cabin upgrades and enhanced flight services are available. When Business Class is not selected lounge facilities may still be booked.

Classic Collection Holidays enjoys

partnerships with fully licensed airline companies specialising in the provision of private jets.

To minimise jet lag set watches to Maldives' time on boarding the plane, drink plenty of water and make sure a spa treatment for your first or second day in resort has been pre-booked.

On arrival in Malé, and once you have cleared customs, our local team will be there to welcome and assist you. On departure they will help you with your luggage and guide you to the airline check-in desks.

What to pack and dress codes

Reef-safe suntan lotions can be an expensive purchase in resort, so buy beforehand. Avoid sunscreens which contain chemicals that are harmful to coral and marine life. Pack snorkel, surf and diving gear to save on local



rental costs. Take sun hats, sunglasses, minimal tropical-friendly clothing, swimwear, sarongs, sandals, flip flops and dive shoes. The Maldives is the perfect place for holiday reading; pack books or profit from the hotel library. Pack personal care products, toiletries and a small first aid kit. If you plan to travel to inhabited islands, take something light that covers from shoulders to knees to respect Muslim sensibilities. Don't forget waterproof mobile phones or cameras and dry bags, to keep valuables beach safe, and a wet bag to separate wet items from dry ones after time spent on the beach, around the pool or snorkelling. Some hotels allow barefoot dining and casual wear in restaurants, others don't. It's best to check individual resort dress codes before travelling.





Currency

Within resorts there is no need to carry money at all. Everything can be billed to the room and settled by credit card prior to departure. Only a small amount of the local currency, Maldivian Rufiyaa, might be needed on a visit to a local inhabited island, although US Dollars are also widely accepted.

Speedboats, seaplanes and domestic flights

Once customs has been cleared passengers are welcomed by a local English-speaking representative with a name board and assisted with their onward travel arrangements. It's a short walk to the speedboat jetty where the resorts' boats await. Transfer times vary from ten minutes to an hour, although we recommend shorter journey times for young families. Speedboats are operated by the individual resorts and are the most cost-effective option for onward journeys to resorts. Boarding is straightforward as the jetty is close to the airport terminal and luggage allowance is not an issue. Once aboard, relax and enjoy the waves, wind and sea-spray until your resort heaves into view. Look out for surrounding islands and dolphins en route.

For seaplane transfers it's a short drive to a dedicated terminal where you can relax in an air-conditioned lounge

with WiFi (connectivity speeds may be slow) and enjoy soft drinks and snacks until the onward flight is ready. Should a specific hotel not have a lounge facility, they can be booked. Seating is unallocated on seaplanes and the window seats have the best views. The seats can be hot so keep a sarong handy to cover them.

A seaplane transfer is an amazing experience and allows quicker coverage of longer distances. There are stunning views, on water take-offs and landings, and barefoot pilots. As seaplanes only fly during daylight hours it's best to arrive into Malé as early as possible – certainly no later than 15h30 – to limit your chances of an overnight stopover in the capital. Seaplanes seat up to 15 passengers, can fly direct to a resort or may make up to a maximum of three splashdowns. Per person hold luggage allowance is 20kg with a 5kg limit on hand luggage. Seaplanes are not wheelchair accessible. Seaplane return transfers are confirmed 24 hours before departure. To enjoy both sea and air travel, and to save on costs, book a seaplane on arrival and a return boat transfer.

A smaller terminal, close to the international terminal, caters for onward transfers by domestic flight. Our local staff will be able to assist with checking in your luggage.

At a glance

Flying time: from London 10½ hours

Main arrival airport: Velana International Airport, Malé

Time difference: GMT+5 hours, but this may vary from resort to resort

Currency: Sterling, Euros and US Dollars can be used to tip staff. Credit cards accepted in hotels. Maldivian Rufiyaa for local island visits only

Language: Dhivehi is the native language but English is very widely spoken

Visas: Completed on arrival, for stays of 30 days or fewer, for UK passport holders

Staying in touch: WiFi is widely available (Face-time, WhatsApp) and more cost effective than phoning

Electricity: 240 volts, many resorts feature standard 3 pin UK sockets but do take a universal adaptor and maybe pack an extension lead for extra plug points

Taxes: An ecological tax of \$6 US, per person per day, is charged. Some hotels charge this in resort, others include it in the package price. Please check at the time of booking

In some cases a domestic flight combined with a speedboat transfer can be a more cost-effective option than a direct seaplane. Compensation for the loss of view comes in the form of increased onboard comfort.

Expert top tips

Check the time

When you arrive at your resort do make sure you're on the correct time: resorts may choose to be one or two hours ahead of Malé time to make the most of sunlight hours. It's good to know the right time before your departure day.

WiFi

Complimentary WiFi is available in the vast majority of resorts, however some resorts will not have full connectivity everywhere on the island. To avoid consuming data, buy a pre-paid sim card or two – available from the two mobile network providers at Malé airport – before joining transfers.

Budgeting

Consider all-inclusive options, not just for meals and drink plans, but also for any daily activities or excursions that may be included. Extras can be costly so an all-inclusive plan might represent better value. And when it comes to excursions it might be best to book in advance to avoid disappointment.

Compare prices for watersports and water activities, and also check the distance of the coral reefs from the resort to verify whether you can reach by swimming a little or have to book a boat for snorkelling or diving. Tipping is not common practice in the Maldives and therefore is not an obligation. If service has been commendable feel free to tip, but it's entirely a personal choice.



Finding the right resort

Consider the size of the island, how remote you would like to be, and whether the style should be contemporary or traditional. Think of how important a wide choice of facilities and restaurants might be. If there's a focus to the holiday - diving, well-being or water sports - some resorts will be better suited than others. For transfers, seaplanes are stunning but speedboats may be quicker. And, for accommodation, reflect on whether you prefer direct access to the ocean or the beach.

Things to consider

Should holiday plans include a visit to local islands and Malé, rather than just staying within the resorts, it's important to respect Muslim sensibilities regarding dress: keep shoulders to knees covered. Topless bathing is not allowed anywhere in the Maldives. Some local islands do have beaches reserved for visitors where swimwear

is permitted. Local islands also have restrictions on public displays of affection and homosexuality is taboo there too. Alcohol is available within the resorts, but importing it to the country risks confiscation and a fine. Similarly, avoid bringing in religious or sacred texts. The fasting month of Ramadan – known locally as Ramazan – is observed by the Muslim population, but there is no detrimental effect on resort services. Ramadan starts on or around the 01 April in 2022, lasts for 30 days, and begins approximately 11 days earlier in each subsequent year.

The Maldives are hugely Instagrammable and very social media-genic, however many of the resorts operate a no drone policy in consideration of the privacy of their guests. And tempting though it may be to take some souvenirs, it is illegal to take any form of shell, sand or coral from the islands.

Our top 15 expert tips

1. Manage your budget and mix it up. Arrive by seaplane, return by speedboat or domestic flight, and share your time between beach villas and overwater villas
2. For shorter holidays speedboat transfers save on waiting times and budget
3. On shorter holidays pre-book activities and excursions to avoid disappointment
4. Carefully consider meal plans and all-inclusive options - extras can be expensive
5. Think about booking accommodation with a private pool whether that's a beach villa or over water
6. For seaplane transfers arrive no later than 15h30 in Malé
7. Book the fast track immigration option on arrival
8. Pack reef-safe sun cream products but don't import alcohol
9. Buy a pre-paid sim card on arrival at Velana International Airport, Malé
10. Check the time at your resort, it might be different from Malé
11. Pack a short extension cable for extra charging sockets
12. Bring your own snorkelling and diving gear to avoid hiring costs and a short wetsuit or lycra rash vest for UV protection
13. Pack dry bags, wet bags and waterproof cameras and phones
14. Observe dress sensibilities when visiting inhabited islands, and be aware that topless sunbathing is not permitted anywhere
15. Drones are not always welcome, if you're thinking of taking one, please check before you travel



On the beach or over water?

This perennial question might slightly miss the point; don't lose sight of the fact that having a private pool may be far more important than deciding whether that pool leads to beach or ocean first.

Upgrade costs between beach and water villas can vary hugely depending on the chosen resort, and in rare cases, such as **Constance Halaveli Maldives**, **Seaside Finolhu** and **Six Senses Laamu**, the over water experience may be the cheaper of the two. So compare prices and check facilities to ensure that the upgrade to a water villa is good value for money: spacious lounging decks, comfy couches, glass floors, privacy and large pools make an over water holiday unforgettable as well as helping to justify the premium cost.

There's much to be said for feeling the perfect talcum powder white sand between toes, and if there are young children in tow, a beach villa might

be the only option. Beach villas give direct access to some of the world's finest beaches and the warm waters beyond without having to navigate steps. And for extra privacy book a villa with private walled garden and wonderful outdoor bathroom. Whilst still being quite secluded, beach villas enjoy easy access to all the main island facilities and allow you to follow the sun with your lounge. For Beach Pool Villas, **Velassaru Maldives** offers conspicuous value for money.

It's often a good idea to maximise value by booking the most expensive accommodation on a less luxurious island, and maybe divide your holiday time between both beach and water villas to better manage your budget, enjoy a fuller holiday experience, and to answer the question, 'over water or on the beach?', once and for all.



24 hours in the Maldives

The Maldives and tranquillity go hand in hand, but the more active need not worry about monotony. There's plenty to do. Here's our guide to 24 hours at Anantara Kihavah Maldives Villas.

Sunrise

Enjoy those first few precious moments of the day watching the sunrise from your own private infinity pool or sun deck. Overwater Villas 201 to 220 should give you the very best views of the sun rising over the Indian Ocean. Try Kihavah's overwater aerial yoga or soothing meditation classes.

Breakfast

One of the few places on earth where you might wish to wake up with the fish is three metres below the ocean's surface at award-winning undersea restaurant and wine cellar SEA. Start the day with an unforgettable champagne breakfast, available upon request, whilst sharks, turtles and tropical fish swim by, beautifully visible through the restaurant's glass walls.

Morning

For mornings dedicated to wellness try a transformative ayurvedic treatment, massage, detoxification therapy or restorative facial at the resort's award-winning overwater spa; there are glass viewing panels to the marine life below. The more active might try aqua aerobics. Cycling might seem an unusual pastime in the Maldives but there are bicycles at Kihavah and the more active might also consider a pad and mitt workout in the Maldives' first and only Muay Thai Boxing ring, tennis, badminton or volleyball. Perhaps try an art lesson with a visiting local artist or learn the secrets of Maldivian, Indian and Thai cookery with a Spice Spoons masterclass. Mornings are also good for diving and snorkelling.



Lunch

For an alternative to the resort's fine-dining underwater restaurant try the poolside bites and refreshing Mediterranean cuisine of Manzaru. Enjoy a selection of European treats with a twist, featuring the freshest seafood. Dessert features a wide range of sweets including a delicious tiramisu.

Afternoon

Experience a taste of Maldivian culture with an afternoon trip to nearby Kudarikilu. Make the short hop to visit the neighbours and enjoy an insight into local life. Take a fishing trip or charter a luxury yacht, motorised vessel or traditional Dhoni boat, with captain and crew, for a more private adventure.

Tranquil waters and bountiful ocean life make Kihavah's house reef, The Golden Wall, a snorkelling wonderland and one of the area's best dive sites. Grab fins and mask for a peerless view of brilliant aquatic life. Further out to sea the waters of the pristine Baa Atoll around Anantara Kihavah Maldives are some of the richest in the Maldives. Discover the majestic giant manta rays at Hanifarū Bay during their migration season from June to November and observe the magical experience of sea turtles in their natural habitat. You can also enrol in a PADI certification course to suit your ability and aspirations at the resort's Elements Dive Centre.

If you prefer to be on, or over, the ocean's surface rather than below there are watersports aplenty from the

more leisurely pursuits of kayaking and paddle boarding to adrenalin-fuelled fly boarding, parasailing, jet ski, water-skiing and kite surfing.

Sunset

A Maldives' sunset is a sight to behold. The most comfortable place from which to view the setting sun is from a Sunset Over Water Pool Villa; villas 232 to 242 will afford you spectacular sunset views. But then again, the considerable charms of the rooftop bar at SKY are hard to resist for a sundowner. For something traditional join the captain and crew aboard the Dhoni boat for a sunset cruise to watch Spinner dolphins at play in their natural environment. Or for a more luxurious experience as the sun sets, board the resort's luxury yacht Ocean Whisperer for sundowner canapés and champagne.

Evening

The evening is the time to indulge in spectacular destination dining: torches light the way to a table on an isolated sandbank as an expert chef prepares carefully crafted Maldivian fusion cuisine with the freshest local, organic ingredients. Alternatively escape to the big screen with an al fresco cinema experience or stargaze through the Maldives' most powerful telescope to learn about the constellations and planets with a storytelling SKY Guru at the resort's overwater observatory.

Thithiboli Kids' Club

The children will never be short of things to do at the resort's children's club. They can set sail on a pirate cruise treasure hunt, enjoy mini master chef cookery, tackle the climbing wall and trampoline park, splash about in the waterpark, take swimming lessons or become ocean explorers with age appropriate dolphin, turtle and divers' marine biology courses and conservation projects.



Anantara Kihavah Maldives Villas

An island romance

The Maldives offer a romantic getaway like no other. There are stunning sunsets and clear, starry night skies, brilliant blue lagoons filled with spectacular marine life and impossibly powder-soft sands framed by swaying coconut palms. Add to these intimate dining, serene spas, beautiful overwater or beach villas with private pools and a host of further exquisite experiences.

Adult focused

Designed with couples in mind there are indulgent spa treatments, charming villas, fine dining, luxury sailing and a wonderful house reef at Maldives' leading adult only resort, **Komandoo Island Resort & Spa**. At adult only **Anantara Veli Maldives Resort** honeymooners can revel in the tranquillity, unwind side by side at the spa, have romantic moments captured by a professional photographer, dine in enchanting settings or spend the day on a deserted island with a personal butler tending to every need. A chic adult only retreat, **Hurawalhi Island Resort** invites you to underwater dining, couples' pampering at the spa and romantic escapes to a private sandbank for tranquil moments, or a host of watersports are available for those wanting something more energetic.

Honeymoons

Many resorts are ideal for a honeymoon or special celebration. The stunning and intimate **Milaidhoo Island Maldives** in the Baa Atoll offers understated, barefoot luxury, discreet yet attentive service and beautiful thatched overwater and beach villas with pool, a dine around gourmet plan and plenty of inspiring experiences just for two, including sleeping under the stars on an isolated sandbank. At **Vakkaru Maldives** honeymoon couples can enjoy romantic private destination dining, a couple's spa treatment or a massage lesson, a delicious floating breakfast in their villa pool and a range of private excursions.

Impressive **Joali** is all about lavish culinary experiences, sophisticated villas, adventurous experiences on, and under, the ocean's surface, and unique moments. Considered one of the most romantic destinations, award winning **Baros Maldives** is perfect for a honeymoon; ride a speedboat out to an ocean deck for a sunrise breakfast, spend time on a secluded sandbank or dine at the water's edge. Elegant honeymoon villas can be found at **Adaaran Prestige Vadoo**, a barefoot butler service at **Soneva Fushi** and luxurious, minimalist villas on stilts over the ocean or treetop villas floating above the coconut trees at **Amilla Maldives Resort and Residences**. Try the Amilla Glamping experience: a night in a bubble tent with dinner, champagne, sauna and plunge pool.

Renewal of vows

Although only Maldivians can legally get married in the Maldives some resorts can offer a picture-perfect ceremony with a symbolic blessing to create a special day, or for those already married a renewal of vows. **Velassaru Maldives** offers a range of renewal of vows' packages with a Maldivian Bodu Beru – big drum - procession leading the couple to the stunning beachfront setting. At **Baros Maldives** the intimate ceremony can take place on a private sandbank or on the jungle-fringed beach. **Vakkaru Maldives'** vow renewal includes

Our top 5 romance hotels



★★★★★

LUX* North Malé Atoll Resort & Villas

★★★★★

Gili Lankanfushi Maldives

★★★★★

Baros Maldives

★★★★★

Komandoo Maldives Resort & Spa

★★★★★

Cinnamon Hakuraa Huraa Maldives



coconut tree planting, a couple's spa treatment and a private sandbank lunch.

Couple's experiences

For a romantic and exclusive overnight experience the tent bubble at **Seaside Finolhu** offers something different; a transparent bubble tent set on a secluded beach complete with four poster bed allows for the most wonderful views of the starry night sky, with a beach barbecue in the evening and a sunrise breakfast at the water's edge the following day. At **Vakkaru Maldives** couples can learn the basic art of massage from a trained therapist and explore the Baa Atoll on a private excursion. Honeymooners can enjoy star gazing through Maldives' largest telescope at **Anantara Kihavah Maldives Villas** and, as the ultimate eternal gift, name a star after their loved one.

Destination dining

At **COMO Maalifushi** there is a choice of exciting dining experiences that will make any stay special; a deserted sandbank is the setting for a gourmet breakfast, the powder-soft sands for a castaway picnic lunch and a secluded beach or villa deck for a romantic candlelit dinner.

For an unforgettable dining experience high above the trees there's **Soneva Fushi**, **One&Only Reethi Rah** or **Niyama Private Islands Maldives**. Or dine surrounded by the hypnotic underwater world at **Hurawalhi Island Resort**, home to the world's largest underwater restaurant.

Cinnamon Hakuraa Huraa Maldives takes romance to another level. Enjoy a mouth-watering meal in barefoot seclusion on a romantic beach. Honeymooners are invited to the resort's Platinum Island adult only haven which is completely removed from the rest of the resort. If you're looking for ultimate privacy, this is it.

Signature dining venues at **Huvafen Fushi Maldives** include a table for two on a rock island on the edge of the ocean reef, a private dining experience around a sunken outdoor tandoor or an indulgent seafood feast set in the waters of the infinity pool. A floating breakfast concept is available at **Vakkaru Maldives** and A-list hideaway **Amilla Maldives Resort and Residences**.



Gili Lankanfushi Maldives

- » Award-winning barefoot luxury; no news, no shoes motto
- » Rustic-chic style, eco-friendly
- » Exceptional service, outstanding dining and ultimate privacy
- » Stand alone Crusoe Residences reached by private boat offer a true castaway feel
- » Mr/Ms Friday butler service
- » Unique experiences: sunset Dhoni cruise, dine under the stars, jungle cinema
- » Surf school



LUX North Male Atoll Resort & Villas*

- » Ultra modern with trendy restaurants, lounge with live DJ sessions
- » Private sandbank picnics, restaurant with wall-to-wall aquarium, candlelit pier for romantic dining
- » Contemporary penthouse villas with private infinity pool and rooftop sun terrace
- » Underwater adventures, surfing, kite surfing
- » Moonlit spa treatments

Family focus

Traditionally the destination of choice for honeymooners and couples seeking an island paradise, the Maldives is more and more becoming a firm favourite with families as well.



and their own gated gardens complete with sun terrace and plunge pool. Two-level family villas at **Kurumba Maldives** boast a private pool, and deluxe beach front view rooms at **Bandos Maldives** are ideal for a family of four with a spacious bedroom and living area and the possibility of interconnecting rooms.

Children's clubs and babysitting

Many family friendly resorts offer complimentary children's clubs for those over three or four, with those younger, usually welcome under parental supervision. Babysitting

Family rooms and villas

Most island resorts offer a range of beach and over-water villas that are roomy enough to accommodate a family of four or more, and the vast majority of resorts offer free stays for children. For families with toddlers and younger children beach-front villas with direct access to the powder-soft sands are ideal, whilst those with older children, might prefer staying in an over water villa. Most over water villas have minimum age criteria for children, generally between eight and twelve years. For younger children a signed waiver may be accepted.

At **Anantara Dhigu Maldives Resort** two bedroom family villas have direct beach access and children can enjoy extra touches such as child-sized bathrobes, children's bath amenities, flip flops and slippers. Family beach villas at **Constance Halaveli Maldives** offer an impressive amount of space



tends to carry an additional charge. Innovative programmes include arts and crafts, coral nursery visits with a marine biologist, star gazing with an astronomer, al fresco film screenings, and surf and scuba diving schools for juniors. Island resorts offering children's clubs include **Niyama Private Islands Maldives** boasting one of the best children's clubs in the Maldives, complimentary for three to twelve year olds. At **Sun Siyam Iru Fushi** children under fifteen stay and eat free of charge when sharing with two adults. Its well-run Koamas Club offers exciting activities and range of experiences for three to twelve year olds. **Soneva Fushi's** complimentary The Den Club is for those over four and there's also a teen lounge. **Kuredu Island Resort & Spa** features one of the largest clubs and welcomes three to twelve year olds free of charge.

Family activities and experiences

At **Anantara Dhigu Maldives Resort** there are cookery classes, outdoor cinema, glass bottom boat trips for spotting the colourful marine life, PADI learn-to-dive courses for juniors over ten years beginners' surf lessons, as well as dolphin watching cruises,

Anantara Dhigu Maldives Resort



Conrad Maldives Rangali Island

bicycles for a riding around the island and glass bottom kayaks for exploring the lagoon. **Niyama Private Islands Maldives** offers complimentary non-motorised watersports, family and children's spa treatments, a simulator room for game lovers, tennis coaching for all ages and diving for all levels including junior courses from eight years, as well as private snorkelling tours with the resident marine biologist to spot turtles, hammerheads and dolphins, and a chance to adopt coral as part of the resort's coral regeneration programme. **Kuredu Island Resort & Spa** offers an excellent selection of land and water based sports, some with lessons. As well as complimentary watersports at **Soneva Fushi** there are gardens, jungle and beaches to explore, star gazing with an astronomer, private al fresco film nights and family picnics and guided snorkelling with a resident marine biologist.

Family dining

At **Niyama Private Islands Maldives** most restaurants offer children's special menus including at the fine

Our top 5 family hotels

Niyama Private Islands Maldives

★★★★★
Niyama Private Islands Maldives

★★★★★
Kurumba Maldives

★★★★★
Anantara Dhigu Maldives Resort

★★★★★
Kuredu Island Resort & Spa

★★★★★
Constance Halaveli Maldives

dining restaurant Edge, reached by speedboat, and Nest, set in a tree house and serving Asian delicacies. **Sun Siyam Iru Fushi** has a selection of eleven restaurants, from global cuisines and themed dinners to weekly barbecues on the beach, Italian favourites and Middle Eastern specialities perfect for sharing. In-villa dining is possible at **Anantara Dhigu Maldives Resort**, and **Kuredu Island Resort & Spa** tempts with sumptuous buffets, healthy dishes at the Beach Shack and Italian favourites at Franco's; sure to be a popular choice with children.

Short transfers

Families with younger children might prefer resorts close to Malé airport to reduce transfer times; **Bandos Maldives** is 20 minutes by speedboat, **Kurumba Maldives**, 10 minutes by speedboat, and **Anantara Dhigu Maldives Resort** is reached by a 30 minute speedboat journey.

All-inclusive or not?

Whilst there are supremely luxurious ‘money-no-object’ resorts in the Maldives, there is also a good choice of excellent resorts offering all-inclusive holidays at more affordable prices. At first glance an all-inclusive option may look expensive, but given the amount of food, drink and activities that are often included, it can be the best way to enjoy your holiday to the full secure in the knowledge that you’re getting the best possible value.

Food quality really matters on Maldives’ holidays, so make sure your all-inclusive meal plan offers a good selection of dining options. The Maldives, for many, are a once-in-a-lifetime destination, so if you really want to enjoy it all, and not be restricted by your budget, an all-inclusive option can be a fine choice.

As the only option at **Constance Moofushi Maldives** is all-inclusive it means that very little isn’t included: premium spirits and daily replenished mini bar, buffet breakfasts and dinners, a choice of buffet or a la carte lunch plus at least one a la carte dinner. Boating excursions, guided snorkelling, and non-motorised watersports are also included alongside complimentary gym access and snorkelling equipment.

Family friendly **LUX* South Ari Atoll Resort & Villas** has a wallet-friendly all-inclusive option which includes access to six of the resort’s seven restaurants and five bars. Unlimited ice cream during afternoon tea and a self-serve mini bar make for memorable extras.

Well-loved by families and couples, **Sun Siyam Iru Fushi** delivers excellent value for money, especially with its Signature Premium all-inclusive option. You can expect a wide variety of drinking and dining options, complimentary snorkelling gear to explore the house reef and a dedicated kids’ club for younger guests.

Diamonds Athuruga, in South Ari Atoll, is one of the Maldives most consistent properties which is well maintained with regular improvements enhancing its appeal. The resort’s

all-inclusive plan includes meals at the Maakeyn buffet restaurant for those in beach bungalows and at Restaurant Thari for those in overwater villas. Mini bars are refilled daily, and selected watersports and an island excursion are covered.

The Indulgence Plan at **OZEN Life Madhoo** is one of the most generous all-inclusive options available. It includes all meals, from breakfast with bubbles, snacks and beverages, to lunch, in-room mini bar and dinner at any of the resort’s five restaurants. It also features one fine-dining experience at M6m, the underwater seafood restaurant. Spa services and diving sessions are also included, the quantity increasing relative to the length of your stay, as are snorkelling excursions and your choice of adventures from a comprehensive list of options.

Laidback and barefoot **Meeru Island Resort & Spa** has an all-inclusive plus package whereby guests can enjoy buffet breakfast, lunches and dinners at one of the two buffet restaurants as well as light bites throughout the day at Dhoni bar, and house drinks. Additional inclusions at this unpretentious resort cover snorkelling trips and a sunset cruise, windsurfing and golf lessons, complimentary yoga classes and access to the sports facilities such as tennis courts and kayaks.

The all-inclusive option at **Kuredu Island Resort & Spa** is generous, covering unlimited food and drinks in buffet restaurants, discounts at a la carte options, and in-room mini bars as well as little perks such as a free snorkelling lesson, yoga, and a sunset cruise. A Gold Package with premium alcohol and free a la carte dining is also available.



LUX South Ari Atoll Resort & Villas

Our top 5 all-inclusive hotels



★★★★★

Constance Moofushi Maldives

★★★★★

LUX* South Ari Atoll Resort & Villas

★★★★★

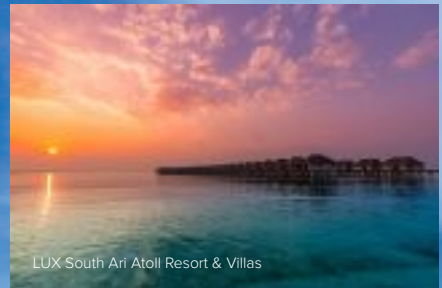
Sun Siyam Iru Fushi

★★★★★

Diamonds Athuruga

★★★★★

OZEN Life Madhoo



LUX South Ari Atoll Resort & Villas



Constance Moofushi Maldives

Hurawalhi Island Resort welcomes guests over 15 years of age and offers an all-inclusive package which includes a choice between daily buffet meals, set menus at a couple of restaurants, a premium selection of more than 200 beverages and complimentary access to a range of sports facilities including the gym, tennis courts and kayaks. A sunset dolphin cruise and half-hour snorkelling session are also included.

Centara Grand Island Resort & Spa includes daily massages as part of its generous all-inclusive package. Other perks include gourmet meals, premium drinks, a constantly replenished mini bar, diving plans and excursions: you can opt to snorkel the nearby coral reef or take a leisurely sunset cruise.

Baros Maldives is popular with couples and offers a variety of packages including Romantic Moments which comes with free champagne and a private candlelit dinner, which is great for honeymooners. There's also an all-inclusive package available to couples and families alike. Called Baros Delight, it includes all three meals, select drinks, and one dinner at the high-end Lighthouse dinner restaurant every four days.

Although a large number of five star hotels do not offer an all-inclusive option the following five star hotels feature attractive dine around options, **Anantara Veli Maldives Resort**, **Atmosphere Kanifushi Maldives** and **Seaside Finolhu**.

Other meal plans

If you're not sure that an all inclusive option is for you, then you may want to look into some of the other meal plans that are available. There are full board choices at a lower price point, or half board packages which include breakfast and dinner, and quite often a range of drinks and snacks too. There are also breakfast only options, or room only packages where no extras are included in the price of your holiday, should you feel that the inclusions which an all-inclusive package bring would not represent good value for the type of holiday you have planned.

Leave the kids *behind*

Considered for many years as one of the world's definitive honeymoon destinations, it's perhaps surprising that so few of the Maldives' resorts are officially recognised as adult only. With an increasing number of families choosing to spend time together in the archipelago, finding an adult only property is a little more difficult than you would expect. True adult only properties are really quite rare.

Here are our suggestions, across a range of price points, of island resorts which attract fewer families and children. These are, by and large, resorts with a high percentage of overwater villas where there are few, if any, child-orientated facilities and where age restrictions may be in place.

Small and private **Komandoo Island Resort & Spa** is an adult only resort. Guests must be at least 18 years old to stay at the property, which is good news for those seeking a completely child-free environment. The resort offers an all-inclusive plan, and overwater villas feature private sundecks with stairs to the ocean below and jacuzzi baths overlooking the lagoon.

Anantara Veli Maldives Resort, although part of the family friendly Anantara Dhigu Maldives Resort, occupies its own separate island and requires a minimum age of 18 years at check-in. Close proximity to two other Anantara properties means that there are many further facilities available should you wish to slip out of your adult only bubble for a while.

Similarly, The Residence Maldives, located on the remote southern Gaafu Alifu Atoll just 20km north of the equator, divides itself between two islands, **The Residence Maldives**

Dhigurah for a family holiday, whilst Falhumaafushi is the perfect couples' retreat. **The Residence Maldives Falhumaafushi** is a delight for romantic honeymoons and intimate escapes. It embodies the heart and soul of pristine island seclusion with 94 thatched villas, Clarins Spa, restaurants which offer fine dining, more casual bites and gastronomic delights and a variety of private dining experiences just for two.

With each of its water villas designed to look like a traditional Maldivian fishing boat **COMO Cocoa Island** is



very much unique. There are 33 water villas and just three island suites. Facilities, which include an excellent spa and yoga pavilion alongside fantastic diving and snorkelling, are geared away from children and towards adults.

Veligandu Island Resort & Spa has a lot of facilities including freshwater pool, dive centre, catamarans and kayaks. With just 12 island rooms and 64 overwater villas, 54 of which have their own on-deck jacuzzi, the island's appeal is definitely aimed at couples.

The boutique **Adaaran Prestige Vadoo** is built around a small and intimate island and has only 40 overwater villas, all with personal butler service. **Baros Maldives** does not allow children under 8 years of age. This very sociable resort is a popular choice for many couples in their thirties and upwards. The allinclusive **Cinnamon Hakuraa Huraa Maldives** has the feel of a boutique resort. There is no swimming pool or children's club and with just 10 island rooms complementing the 70 overwater villas it's a good choice for couples.



Komandoo Island Resort & Spa

Our top 5 hotels for adults



★★★★

Komandoo Island Resort & Spa

★★★★★

Anantara Veli Maldives Resort

★★★★★

Veligandu Island Resort & Spa

★★★★★

The Residence Maldives
Falhumaafushi

★★★★★

Cinnamon Hakuraa Huraa
Maldives



Villa life

Even in a holiday destination as secluded as the Maldives, villa accommodation adds a further level of privacy and seclusion allowing you to enjoy, to the full, quality time with family and friends in your own space with your own facilities.

Soneva Fushi features 63 beachfront villas and eight water retreats ranging in size from one to nine bedrooms, located on either the sunset or sunrise sides of the island: sunset for snorkelling and dolphins, sunrise for tranquillity. Overwater one bedroom villa retreats with waterslide, offer plenty of space and facilities for families of four, and include private freshwater pool, upper deck dining, retractable roof and wine fridge. A two bedroom overwater villa can

accommodate up to four adults and two children. Beachfront villas range from single storey to duplex arrangements, with many featuring private pools, and make a great choice for large families or groups of friends. These are mainly one or two bedroom villas, although there are five, six and nine bedroom residences available with private facilities such as gym, library, sauna, wine cellar, kitchen and, in the case of Villa 37 an 11 metre high moonlight viewing tower.

Soneva Fushi



Whilst great for multigenerational holidays, villas are also ideal for those who can justify more time away from the office by having sufficient space, and robust WiFi connectivity, to keep work ticking over while on holiday.



For families with older children **Gili Lankanfushi Maldives** features 45 luxuriously rustic overwater wooden villas, a limited number of which have private pools. Seven Crusoe Residences offer even more privacy as they are accessed via an on-demand pontoon boat service. The ultimate villa is the Private Reserve, only accessible by boat, and featuring private spa, pool, gym, cinema, two-storey waterslide and chef's kitchen. There are four bedrooms including a duplex master suite with two bedrooms. Personal butlers have their own live-in quarters at the reserve. The villa can comfortably sleep eight and cater for gatherings of more than 20 people.

Seaside Finolhu features a vast choice of 125 beach, lagoon and ocean thatched villas. Beach Villas lead out to a private stretch of sand. Ocean Pool Villas allow you to spot dolphins from your deck. If you're a family or group of friends go all out for the Two Bedroom Rock Star Ocean Pool Villa. Unlike most resorts in the Maldives, Finolhu's entry-level accommodation is over water. The resort offers superb personal service and a stunning desert-island setting. The sweeping narrow sand bar that connects the main island to the three smaller islands is the longest in the Maldives. With humourous design motifs, and a fresh, breezy appeal, this is a luxurious, retro island getaway with a difference.

Vakkaru Maldives enjoys glorious isolation amidst luscious tropical fauna. Overwater villas line the lagoon and beach villas are just a few footsteps from the sand. The high ceilings, floor-to-ceiling glass and open sides of the villas add to the sense of abundant space. The villas here are particularly spacious. Some come with private plunge pools, but all have outdoor living space. There is a four-bedroom overwater pool residence too.

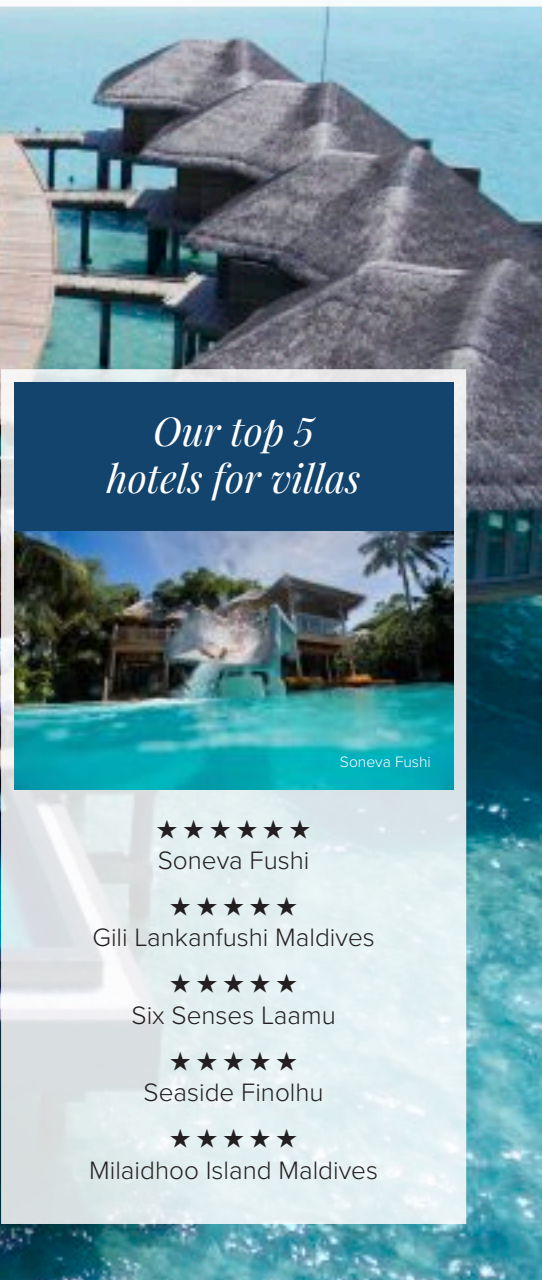
At the more remote **Six Senses Laamu** many of the resort's 97 spacious thatched villas and its facilities are built

overwater, but beach villas and on-land dining are an option. Eco-friendly, and yet supremely luxurious in every way, all villas are built to harmonise with the local environment and offer the utmost in privacy and seclusion.

JA Manafaru offers overwater villas and beach bungalows, all with private pools and an emphasis on privacy, at the end of a spectacular seaplane transfer from Malé. While the Sunrise Water Villas bask in huge floor-to-ceiling windows, the idyllic Beach Villas are hidden tropical retreats, with a private beach cabana and open-air bathroom just steps from the pristine white sands. The dining choices here are excellent. The Cellar, an underground 'wine cave' that sits

two-and-a-half metres below sea level, is the island's exclusive French-influenced haute-cuisine dining venue.

Milaidhoo Island Maldives is a small island: it's a ten minute stroll from one end to the other. Its Water Pool villas and Beach Pool villas are particularly in keeping with their environment and no less beautiful for it. Light and spacious, all have private pools. Beach Villas offer more space but have slightly smaller pools. Water Villas have infinity pools, day beds and easy access to the ocean. Upgrade to the residences for butler service, a private chef and an outdoor cinema. Ba'theli, the resort's signature boat restaurant with towering mast and sail, offers the finest Maldivian cuisine.



Our top 5 hotels for villas



Soneva Fushi

★★★★★
Soneva Fushi

★★★★★
Gili Lankanfushi Maldives

★★★★★
Six Senses Laamu

★★★★★
Seaside Finolhu

★★★★★
Milaidhoo Island Maldives

Health & wellbeing

Overwater spas

For a holiday focused on health and wellbeing the chic resort of **Kagi Maldives Spa Island** is one of the Maldives' best. The impressive Baani Spa, a striking spherical spa suspended over the translucent lagoon, is home to four ocean view treatment rooms, a yoga room with sound therapy for deep meditation, a clean-eating restaurant and spa boutique, and offers unique wellness journeys and wonderful holistic rituals, remedies and treatments for mind, body and spirit. Not content with just one spa **Conrad Maldives Rangali Island** boasts two unique spa experiences; The Spa Retreat on Rangalifinolhu Island and Over Water Spa on Rangali Island, offering a comprehensive range of couples' treatments, tailored massages and chakra colour rituals, and mesmerising views of the corals below from glass-floored treatment rooms at the overwater spa.

An underwater setting

The island hideaway of **Huvafen Fushi Maldives** can claim the world's first and only underwater spa where two of its eight treatment rooms are set eight metres below the ocean, with large panoramic glass panels for views of the underwater world. Well executed treatments include facials created by skincare expert Teresa Tarmey and exceptional massages created by acclaimed massage expert Beata Aleksandrowicz.

Villa retreat

Award-winning Banyan Tree signature treatments feature holistic remedies for your complete physical, mental and spiritual renewal. Be pampered with a range of spa treatments based on

traditional Asian healing philosophies. For the ultimate spa holiday enjoy complimentary treatments when staying at the Spa Sanctuary Pool Villa at **Banyan Tree Vabbinfaru**.

Private jungle retreat

At **Four Seasons Resort Maldives at Landaa Giraavaru**, the Ayurvedic focussed AyurMa Spa provides holistic, diet and lifestyle programmes. The Om Supti Night Spa Ritual paves the way for restful sleep; retreat to a private jungle clearing at night with a swinging bed, enjoy a soothing Moondrop Therapy and a balancing facial therapy, and finish with an al fresco Inner Peace bath.

Secluded treatments

The tantalising paradise island **Six Senses Laamu** takes a holistic approach with its personalised wellness programmes focusing on detox, fitness and sleep, as well as offering soothing Ayurvedic therapies, massages and body treatments, indulgent facials and nutritional advice at its highly regarded spa, where secluded treatment rooms

are dotted on the beach or nestle amidst the lush landscaping. **Joali Spa by Espa** is a luxuriously indulgent retreat. Treatments in spa pavilions combine traditional holistic therapies, modern day techniques and Maldivian influences. Vitality pools, relaxation terraces and a fitness centre complete the picture.

Yoga and meditation

Many resorts offer yoga and meditation, either as group classes or on a one to one basis. At **Anantara Veli Maldives Resort** complimentary sunrise and sunset yoga classes are available for all skill levels. **Four Seasons Resort Maldives at Landaa Giraavaru** offers aqua, aerial and pregnancy yoga, a yoga energy trail and three to five day yoga therapy courses. **Six Senses Laamu** features a range of wellness activities including aerial yoga, hatha yoga for families and mindfulness meditation. Yoga by the ocean can be practiced in the overwater Chi Pavilion and guided meditation on the beach at **One&Only Reethi Rah**.



The serenity of the Maldives provides the perfect backdrop to heavenly treatments, holistic therapies and relaxing wellness rituals performed by highly-skilled therapists.

Luxurious spa sanctuaries are set over turquoise lagoons, by pristine white sands, nestling in verdant jungle vegetation or uniquely located under the ocean.

Joali Maldives



We recommend

Huvafen Fushi Maldives

Underwater dream

A signature treatment at the underwater spa at Huvafen Fushi Maldives designed to restore a natural sleep pattern using a combination of reflexology, pressure point and shiatsu techniques followed by a soothing massage and ancient breathing techniques.

Dhimaalis Maldivian experience

A gentle body exfoliation using sand and Maldivian herbs, washed off in the ocean and finished with a massage.

Jet lag pure massage

This energising and restorative massage treatment will aid a quick recovery from long journeys.

We recommend

Six Senses Laamu

Himalayan body polish

An invigorating body polish using mineral-rich Himalayan crystal salts and rare Ayurveda Aromatherapy oils leaving the skin visibly radiant and deeply moisturised.

Cleansing ritual

An intense full-body scrub and cocooning wrap using a detoxifying blend of salt, seaweed, lemon and eucalyptus accompanied by a relaxing head massage.

Laamu Kaashi Theyo

A soothing body treatment to revive and rehydrate the skin. Using ingredients from local coconuts, a body scrub and cocoon is concluded with a relaxing massage to release tension.

We recommend

Kagi Maldives Spa Island

Gemstone facial

A microcrystal exfoliation with a spicy enzyme peel, luxurious massage and brightening antioxidant serums to leave skin shining brilliantly.

Himalayan body peel

A powerful superfood skin cocktail of pomegranate, goji, acai and bilberry to exfoliate, followed by a buffing mandarin orange scrub and finished with a luxurious scalp massage.

Our top 5 spa hotels



★★★★★

Kagi Maldives Spa Island

★★★★★

Six Senses Laamu

★★★★★

Huvafen Fushi Maldives

★★★★★

Banyan Tree Vabbinfaru

★★★★★

Joali

An underwater discovery

Few places are quite so ripe for underwater discovery as the Indian Ocean, where whale sharks, manta rays, hammerheads, turtles and a whole host of exotic fish dart through some of the planet's clearest waters, and the Maldives offers good diving conditions all year round.

The best visibility is from December to April with generally excellent sea conditions. Short, sharp showers from May to August reduce visibility, as does plankton density in May but this attracts manta rays and whale sharks. Air and water temperatures top 27°C and visibility is from 15 to 40 metres. The Maldives is also great for snorkelling. There are shallow coral gardens in front of many resorts, and tours take guests to the best spots including chances to see blacktip reef sharks.

Discover the joy of diving

For those who have never tried diving before, a Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI) Discover Scuba Diving programme introduces participants under direct instructor supervision. From there graduate onto entry level courses. PADI scuba courses consist of five dives spread over three days, and open water courses entail nine dives and take five days to complete. The theory sections can be completed online before leaving home via the PADI e-learning initiative, saving time whilst on holiday. The costs of Open Water diving courses are comparable to those in the UK, although prices vary and are generally commensurate with the star rating of the resort.

Experienced divers might like to try advanced, rescue or divemaster courses or wreck diving, shark and ray diving, or diving with underwater propulsion vehicles.

Diving safety

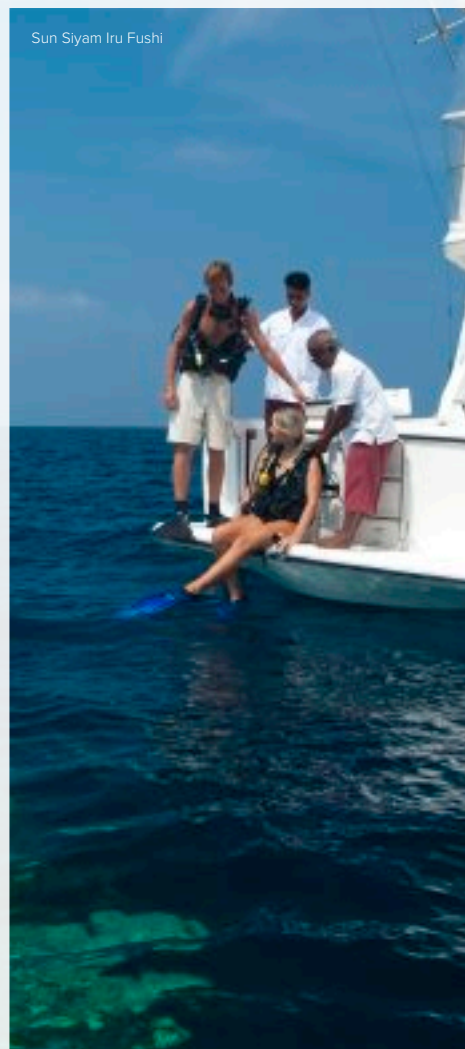
Although wet suits are not necessary for snorkelling, short wet suits, or

UV50 lycra Rash Vests can help avoid sunburn to the back, give a degree of protection from the coral and allow you to dive deeper than wearing a t-shirt. Make sure that you have suitable travel insurance and medical cover for diving. To avoid decompression sickness leave 24 hours between diving and taking a flight.

Where to stay

Marine adventures are guaranteed at **Baros Maldives** thanks to a special house reef, close location to Manta

Point, and fluorescent night dives. **Vilamendhoo Island Resort & Spa** is a long-standing favourite with serious divers owing to its excellent house reef, caves, vibrant soft corals, mantas and night fluo dives. Eco-conscious divers should head to **Banyan Tree Vabbinfaru**, where sharks, turtles, eagle rays and shipwrecks count among the treasures. Guests can venture off on a full-moon night snorkel with the resident Marine Lab team.



Our top 5 diving & snorkelling hotels

Kuredu Island Resort & Spa

★★★★★

Kuredu Island Resort & Spa

★★★★★

Komandoo Island Resort & Spa

★★★★★

LUX* South Ari Atoll Resort & Villas

★★★★★

Constance Moofushi Maldives

★★★★★

Diamonds Thudufushi



Meet the neighbours

From May to November Baa Atoll is the best place for mingling with **manta rays**. Addu Atoll attracts rays with a wingspan exceeding 5 metres and it's possible to snorkel alongside them all year round. Elusive and endangered **whale sharks** are found year-round in the South Ari Atoll with numbers peaking from August to November. **Sea turtles** inhabit most parts of the Maldives, but the largest numbers are attracted to Lhaviyani Atoll's underwater sea grass meadows.

Hammerhead shark migrations occur between November and May when large schools of the predators visit North Ari Atoll; a scuba qualification and nerves of steel are required to get up close and personal.

Six Senses Laamu is the only resort to offer blackwater diving: a night dive which attracts extraordinary creatures via LED lights. Dhidhoofinolhu Island, where **LUX* South Ari Atoll Resort & Villas** is located, is surrounded by a magnificent, sheltered lagoon rich in marine life. The South Ari Atoll is famous for its marine diversity and especially for its whale sharks which divers can find here all year round. More than 50 dive sites are quite easily accessible from this luxurious retreat. **Filitheyo Island Resort** is one of the finest diving locations in the Maldives, the house reef is in fine health and the dive centre excellent. **Kuredu Island Resort & Spa** is home to one of the largest and longest running diving and snorkelling operations in the Maldives. The highly respected diving outfit, Prodivers, offers a full range of daily

excursions and courses catering for beginners and experienced divers and snorkellers alike. They also have bases at **Komandoo Island Resort & Spa** and **Lily Beach Resort & Spa**.

Constance Moofushi Maldives offers PADI courses to suit every level and 32 dive sites nearby are occupied by whale sharks, dolphins, sea eagles and mantas. More experienced divers might like to try night snorkelling at **COMO Maalifushi**, located near Whale Shark Point. Its position in the shelter of the outer edge of an atoll guarantees **Diamonds Thudufushi** a rich, colourful coral reef which is easily accessible for thrilling dives. The IDive Diving Centre runs courses for beginners and experienced divers as part of an all-inclusive package which includes equipment and expert instruction.

The very best dive sites

January to April

Baa Atoll: Dhigala Haa for shark spotting.

Raa Atoll: Fenfushi Giri for stingrays, tuna and dolphins.

Reethi Thila: for a huge diversity of fish life.

Lhaviyani Atoll: Kuredu Express for fast flowing currents and sharks. Shipyard for wrecks, healthy coral and reef fish.

North Malé Atoll: Girifushi Thila for the rainbow reef.

South Malé Atoll: Guraidhoo Corner for strong currents and diverse marine life. Cocoa Thila for sharks and tuna.

North Ari Atoll: Maaya Thila for caves, octopus eagle rays and sharks.

South Ari Atoll: Machchafushi Wreck for superb underwater photography. Maamigili Reef for whale sharks.

Addu Atoll: British Loyalty Wreck for table and soft corals. Shark Hotel for exceptional shark encounters.

May to November

Baa Atoll: Hanifaru Bay for whale sharks and manta ray.

North Malé Atoll: Manta Point for manta rays.

North Ari Atoll: Fesdhoo Lagoon for manta ray night dives.



Once in a lifetime Maldives' moments

The annual Perseid meteor shower is one of the brightest, most beautiful astronomical events that can be viewed from Earth. This glittering, hours-long cascade of twinkling meteors streaking across the sky generally falls between the 16 July and the 23 August with peak viewing occurring before dawn on the 13 August. There is perhaps nowhere better in the world to view it than from the Maldives, and specifically **Anantara Kihavah Maldives Villas'** overwater observatory. Surrounded by nothing but open skies above and the ocean below, it reveals a whole new world of wonder as it's the only observatory in the Maldives to feature a research-specification telescope.

From June to October visitors may be treated to a natural phenomenon that turns the night-time ocean into a field of glowing blue stars. The bright blue light is the result of a natural chemical reaction which occurs when plankton, abundant in the Indian Ocean's warm waters, is disturbed by oxygen. This starry look on the ocean bed and

shorelines is one of the most unique things to witness in the Maldives and is particularly noticeable at **Adaaran Prestige Vadoo, Velassaru Maldives, Kuredu Island Resort & Spa, Hurawhali Island Resort and Meeru Island Resort & Spa.**

Much of the marine life of the Maldives, including the corals, contain tiny pigments that reflect UV light in their tissue. Ultraviolet night dives feature divers equipped with UV LED light wands which, when shone over the creatures and corals, lights them up brilliantly in fluorescent greens, yellows and reds. Octopus, moray eels, and sharks are also more active at night. This type of diving is a whole new way to experience the beauty that exists beneath the waves of the Indian Ocean. For further details see pages 30 and 31.



Soneva Fushi

Four Seasons Resort Maldives at Landaa Giraavaru



Travelling from the night sky to the ocean depths, **Four Seasons Resort Maldives at Landaa Giraavaru** has become the first venue to launch submarine excursions. With a professional pilot at the controls, up to two passengers can skim over coral formations of Landaa Giraavaru's Baa Atoll, fly through shoals of brightly coloured fish, encounter turtles, sharks, dolphins and manta rays and explore the Maldivian waters down to a depth of 40 metres. The pilot narrates each 60 minute flight. The submarine is just the latest in some once in a lifetime underwater moments.

For a unique romantic dinner for two, or a special family celebration, underwater restaurants add a certain wow factor. **Conrad Maldives Rangali Island** features the world's first undersea restaurant, Ithaa, located five metres below the sea and offering panoramic views of marine life and coral gardens. Other options include SEA at **Anantara Kihavah Maldives Villas** and SUBSIX at **Niyama Private Islands Maldives**. Try a champagne brunch or leisurely lunch, when there's less reflection from the glass.

They are not the only underwater spots in the Maldives. **Niyama Private Islands Maldives** boasts an underwater club attracting international DJs, **Huvafen Fushi Maldives** has underwater spa treatment rooms and **Conrad Maldives Rangali Island** an underwater master suite.



Conrad Maldives Rangali Island

Above the ocean the Maldives' most captivating tree top experiences include dining at Nest at **Niyama Private Islands Maldives**, the elevated Fresh at **Soneva Fushi** and, complete with 15 metres wingspan, the Manta Ray Tree House at **Joali**.

The Maldives isn't known for its party scene, but **W Maldives** is the exception to prove the rule. One of the country's most upbeat resorts, it boasts pool-party charm, with the chance to dine ankle-deep in water or rock out at DJ nights.



Soneva Fushi

For a view of the Maldives that you'll never forget, take a tandem skydive: securely harnessed to an experienced instructor you'll experience the thrill of free-fall at speeds of over 120 miles per hour. Adrenaline enthusiasts can live this truly unforgettable dropzone adventure at **Kandima Maldives** on Dhaalu Atoll.



Kandima Maldives

If, by contrast, you're feeling in need of utter seclusion, the answer is to hire a private island. Handily, also part of **W Maldives** resort is Gaathafushi Island which guests can have entirely to themselves. Opt for a barefoot barbecue including lobster tail and spiced squid, or choose the overnight Robinson Crusoe experience. Sleep in your luxurious bed beneath the stars and enjoy an unforgettable sunrise champagne breakfast. For more details on private islands see pages 34 and 35.

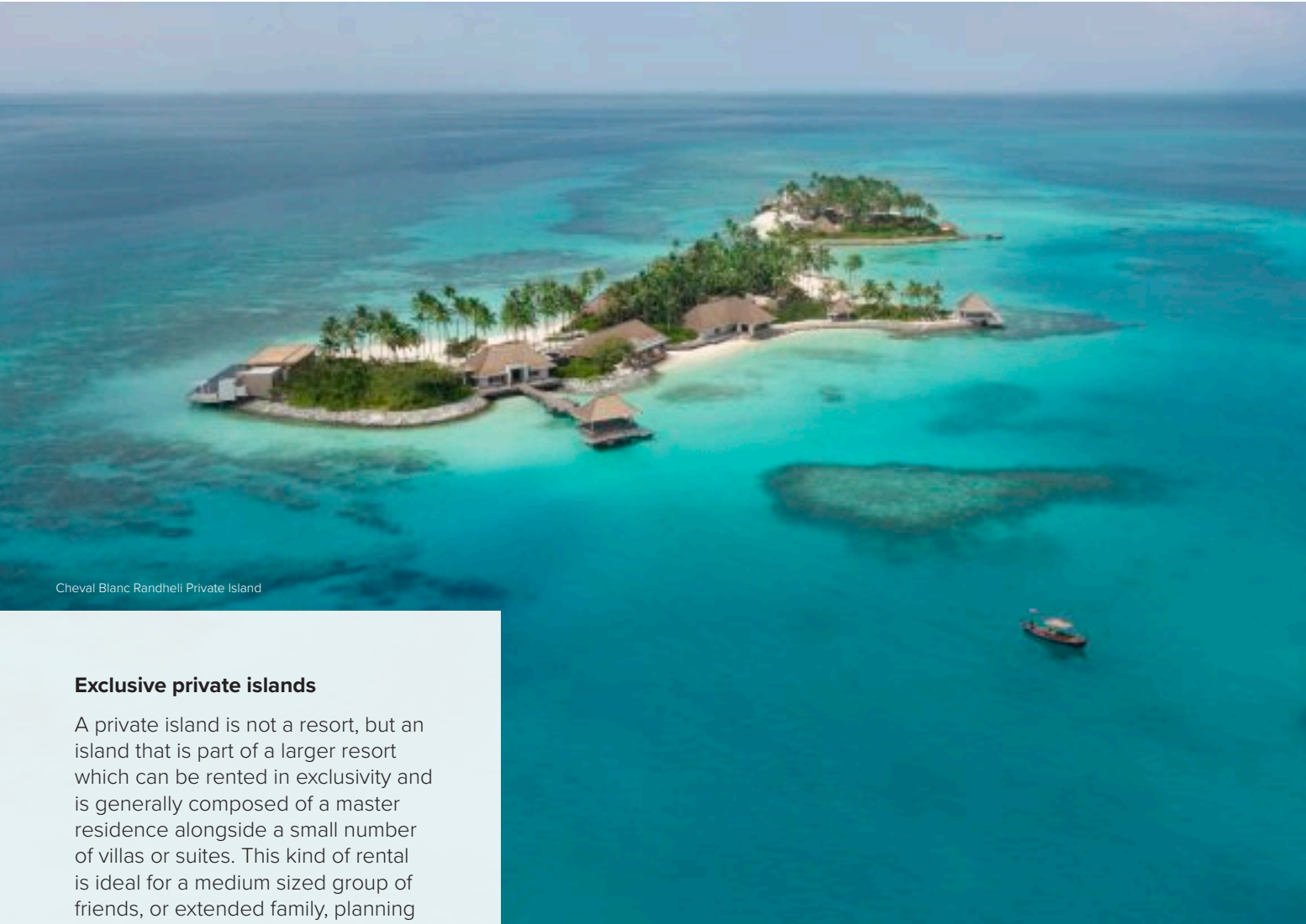
Stay in a transparent beach bubble dome room on a private sandbank surrounded by the ocean and beneath the starlit night sky. Stays last from sunset until sunrise and as well as star-gazing opportunities there's a private chef to prepare a barbecue meal on the beach, and your own personal Bubble Butler on-hand for any additional requests. Inside the Beach Bubble, guests can expect all the comforts of a hotel suite, including a double bed and bathroom. Guests staying at **Seaside Finolhu** for three or more nights can book the Beach Bubble experience.



Seaside Finolhu

Private islands

If what you want is utter seclusion and perfect peace on holiday, in a location that's off-limits to everyone but your loved ones, friends and family, then an exclusive private island hire, just for you and yours, is the only place to go.



Cheval Blanc Randheli Private Island

Exclusive private islands

A private island is not a resort, but an island that is part of a larger resort which can be rented in exclusivity and is generally composed of a master residence alongside a small number of villas or suites. This kind of rental is ideal for a medium sized group of friends, or extended family, planning a very special celebratory holiday. Private islands offer the ultimate in personal service and luxury.

Cheval Blanc Randheli Private Island sprawls across a three acre island, accessible from a private berth and jetty. The island's four bedroom villa is the epitome of lush, modern island living with exceptional indoor and outdoor spaces, a dedicated team of ambassadors and a vibrant array of tailored services and amenities.



Ithaafushi Private Island Maldives



Velaa Private Island

For one night only

Gaathafushi W Maldives Private Island is a pristine, tiny island slightly more than a stone's throw from W Maldives. Book it for the perfect proposal, a romantic overnight stay in a villa under the stars, a special occasion with your loved ones and friends, or for group parties. You can have this tropical playground completely to yourself for the day, or for an overnight Robinson Crusoe

experience. Enjoy the ultimate in serenity at the silent lagoon or hang out on the signature W Bed under a thatched roof. Unwind like never before while your own private chef sets up a special candlelit BBQ as the sun dips over the horizon. Wake up as the sun rises with a champagne breakfast.



Naladhu Private Islands Maldives

Need more space?

Should a private island not offer enough accommodation for your party size, there are some resort islands that are large enough to offer more space but still small enough to be rented in exclusivity. **Naladhu Private Islands Maldives** is a luxury resort of 20 private houses on the edge of a lagoon in South Malé. Up to 50 guests for a minimum of 3 nights can enjoy the pristine beaches, unspoiled jungle, a private pool for each house, daily gourmet breakfasts, world-class dining, luxury spa, personalised butler service and an exclusive day-cruise aboard a luxury private yacht.

Nestled in the collection of islands that form the Noonu Atoll, the 47 villas, houses and residence of **Velaa Private Island** can be hired exclusively for parties of up to 134 guests for a minimum of four nights. You and your guests will have the pristine white beaches and tropical forests to yourselves, a pick of infinity pools, a choice of five restaurants, an incredible wine cellar, a full-service spa and nine-hole golf course. For a wedding, birthday or the ultimate celebratory lottery-win holiday, take the entire island for yourself.

For parties of up to 150 guests over a minimum three night stay, **W Maldives** offers its 77 villas in exclusivity. **Sheraton Maldives Full Moon Resort & Spa** can accommodate more than 350 guests for a minimum of three nights on an exclusive basis.

These bespoke total buyout experiences are exclusively crafted for travellers looking for elevated privacy, exceptional personalised service and luxurious amenities.

Twin centre stays

Why settle for one destination when more can be visited and discovered? Extend your holiday or break up the journey and enjoy completely different cultures to enrich your whole holiday experience.



Vibrant cities

With direct flights between Malé, Abu Dhabi, Doha, Dubai, Kuala Lumpur and Singapore, you might like to combine your holiday in the Maldives with time spent in one of these intriguing cities.

Cultural adventures

Before heading to the tranquil island life of the Maldives take in fascinating Istanbul; the only city in the world to straddle two continents. It's a vibrant and historic blend of Eastern and Western cultures. Alternatively add some exotic Asian culture to your island odyssey. Malaysia is a tempting twin centre possibility with direct flights between Kuala Lumpur and Malé taking just under four and a half hours. Kuala Lumpur is a heady and enticing mix of the ancient and modern with skyscrapers, historic monuments, glitzy oversized shopping malls, hectic markets and irresistible food stalls. The city-garden which is Singapore is becoming one of Asia's A-list destinations: there's street food, shopping malls and stunning eco-scrappers.

Arabian adventures

Less than four hours' flying time from the Maldives, Dubai is renowned for its strikingly modern architecture, superb hotels, shopping and hugely diverse leisure experiences. The UAE's capital Abu Dhabi has plenty to explore including Ferrari World, The Louvre Abu Dhabi, Warner Bros World and the opulent and dramatic Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque. Doha offers sleek skyscrapers and superb restaurants as well as a traditional souk, grand old forts and centuries of history at the immersive Museum of Islamic Art. Greater contrasts to the islands of the Maldives would be difficult to find.

Island adventures

For further exploration of the Indian Ocean embrace the island differences between the Maldives, the Seychelles and Sri Lanka. Just three hours' flying time separates Malé from Mahe, the largest of the Seychelles' islands. Take a hiking tour to the summit of Morne Blanc, visit stunning national parks and exotic botanical gardens and celebrate the colourful charm of the bustling

capital Victoria. Sri Lanka is a popular twin centre choice just 60 minutes' flight time from Malé and where you can savour mountain peaks, rainforests, tea plantations, temperate hill stations and the tropical coast.

Private tours and safaris

Before flying onto the beckoning beaches of the Maldives experience a tailor-made private tour of Sri Lanka visiting the ancient cities, rock fortresses, national parks and beautiful temples of Sri Lanka. There are also elephants, leopards and crocodiles to spot. Alternatively head to Kenya on safari and take in some of the finest wildlife viewing in Africa. Join a private tour to spot the Big Five, take an exhilarating hot-air balloon ride, and enjoy days that start with champagne bush breakfasts and end with sundowners. Fly onto the Maldives from Nairobi via Doha or Dubai. Sri Lanka or Kenya twin centres make an excellent choice for a honeymoon or a special, celebratory holiday.

Two islands one holiday

If you put aside a day for travelling on a longer duration holiday, you can divide your time between two different resorts to experience more of the Maldives. There is the opportunity to travel between different atolls, although this would likely involve transfers from your first resort back to Malé and then an onward transfer via speedboat, domestic flight or seaplane to your next location. Alternatively, you may find sufficient variety staying at contrasting resorts within the same atoll, where resort to resort direct boat transfers would negate the need to travel via Malé, thus saving time.



LUX South Ari Atoll Resort & Villas

Experience a private tour of Sri Lanka before flying onto the beckoning beaches of the Maldives

LUX North Ari Atoll Resort & Villas



In **South Malé** and **North Malé Atolls** book a thatched-roof water villa at Velassaru Maldives, a sociable resort with plenty of restaurants bars and a daily entertainment schedule, followed by a few nights staying in a beach villa on the quieter, smaller and more traditional resort of Baros Maldives known for its fine cuisine and flourishing house reef. Although in different atolls both properties are a short speedboat ride from Malé. Away from the bright lights of Malé, **South Ari Atoll** has a more Robinson Crusoe experience. Take a seaplane and divide your time on lively Constance Moofushi Maldives with the more restrained Constance Halaveli Maldives. Other easy access South Ari twin centres include combinations of Lily Beach Resort & Spa, Vilamendhoo Island Resort & Spa, Mirihi Island Resort and Drift Thelu Veliga Retreat. Lots of different hotels within **Baa Atoll** work very well together. Combine the more forgiving prices of properties such as Seaside Finolhu with higher end options like Anantara Kihavah Maldives Villas or Vakkaru Maldives. On **Raa Atoll** pair Adaaran Prestige Water Villas with beach villas at Heritage Aarah.

Maldives resort options

This Maldives' guide (first published September 2021) showcases just some of Classic Collection Holidays' more popular resorts. The experts on our personalised travel teams have the ability to offer a much wider selection of accommodation. Below and opposite is an index of the majority of our featured properties, listed alphabetically. We are able to offer any existing, or future, island resorts as long as we are satisfied that they meet the necessary health and safety criteria and standards of customer service. Kindly note that, more often than not, domestic flight transfers also include an additional speedboat transfer of between 10 and 30 minutes.

Resort	Star rating	Atoll	Transfer type
aaaVeee Nature's Paradise	4 star	Dhaalu Atoll	Seaplane 40 mins or domestic flight 45 mins
Adaaran Club Rannalhi	3 star	South Malé Atoll	Speedboat 45 mins
Adaaran Prestige Vadoo	5 star	South Malé Atoll	Speedboat 15 mins
Adaaran Prestige Water Villas	5 star	Raa Atoll	Seaplane 40 mins or domestic flight 65 mins
Adaaran Select Hudhuran Fushi	4 star	North Malé Atoll	Speedboat 30 mins
Adaaran Select Meedhupparu	4 star	Raa Atoll	Seaplane 45 mins or domestic flight 65 mins
Amari Havodda Maldives	5 star	Gaafu Dhaalu	Domestic flight 65 mins
Amaya Kuda Rah Maldives	5 star	South Ari Atoll	Seaplane 25 mins
Amilla Maldives Resort and Residences	5 star	Baa Atoll	Seaplane 30 mins or domestic flight 35 mins
Anantara Dhigu Maldives Resort	5 star	South Malé Atoll	Speedboat 30 mins
Anantara Kihavah Maldives Villas	5 star	Baa Atoll	Seaplane 35 mins or domestic flight 35 mins
Anantara Veli Maldives Resort	5 star	South Malé Atoll	Speedboat 30 mins
Angaga Island Resort and Spa	4 star	South Ari Atoll	Seaplane 30 mins
Angsana Ihuru	5 star	North Malé Atoll	Speedboat 20 mins
Angsana Velavaru	5 star	Dhaalu Atoll	Seaplane 45 mins
Atmosphere Kanifushi Maldives	5 star	Lhaviyani Atoll	Seaplane 35 mins
Ayada Maldives	4 star	Gaafu Dhaalu	Domestic flight 100 mins
Baglioni Resort Maldives	5 star	Dhaalu Atoll	Seaplane 40 mins
Bandos Maldives	4 star	North Malé Atoll	Speedboat 20 mins
Banyan Tree Vabbinfaru	5 star	North Malé Atoll	Speedboat 20 mins
Baros Maldives	5 star	North Malé Atoll	Speedboat 20 mins
Centara Grand Island Resort & Spa	5 star	South Ari Atoll	Seaplane 25 mins
Centara Ras Fushi Resort & Spa	4 star	North Malé Atoll	Speedboat 20 mins
Cheval Blanc Randheli	5 star	Noonu Atoll	Seaplane 40 mins
Cinnamon Dhonveli Maldives	4 star	North Malé Atoll	Speedboat 25 mins
Cinnamon Hakuraa Huraa Maldives	4 star	Meemu	Seaplane 40 mins
Coco Bodu Hithi	5 star	North Malé Atoll	Speedboat 40 mins
Coco Palm Dhuni Kolhu	4 star	Baa Atoll	Seaplane 30 mins or domestic flight 55 mins
Cocoon Maldives	5 star	Lhaviyani Atoll	Seaplane 30 mins
COMO Cocoa Island	5 star	South Malé Atoll	Speedboat 40 mins
COMO Maalifushi	5 star	Thaa Atoll	Seaplane 50 mins
Conrad Maldives Rangali Island	5 star	South Ari Atoll	Seaplane 25 mins
Constance Halaveli Maldives	5 star	North Ari Atoll	Seaplane 20 mins
Constance Moofushi Maldives	5 star	South Ari Atoll	Seaplane 30 mins
Dhigali Maldives	5 star	Raa Atoll	Seaplane 40 mins or domestic flight 120 mins
Dhigufaru Island Resort	4 star	Baa Atoll	Seaplane 30 mins or domestic flight 60 mins
Diamonds Athuruga	5 star	South Ari Atoll	Seaplane 25 mins
Diamonds Thudufushi	5 star	South Ari Atoll	Seaplane 35 mins
Drift Thelu Veliga Retreat	4 star	South Ari Atoll	Seaplane 30 mins or domestic flight 65 mins
Dusit Thani Maldives	5 star	Baa Atoll	Seaplane 40 mins or domestic flight 35 mins
Ellaidhoo Maldives by Cinnamon	4 star	North Ari Atoll	Seaplane 25 mins or speedboat 90 mins
Eriyadu Island Resort	3 star	North Malé Atoll	Speedboat 45 mins
Faarufushi Maldives	5 star	Raa Atoll	Seaplane or domestic flight 40 mins
Fairmont Maldives Sirru Fen Fushi	5 star	Shaviyani	Seaplane 55 mins or domestic flight 100 mins
Filitheyo Island Resort	4 star	Faafu Atoll	Seaplane 35 mins
Floating Resort by Scuba Spa Maldives	5 star	Malé	Speedboat 10 mins
Four Seasons Resort Maldives at Kuda Huraa	5 star	North Malé Atoll	Speedboat 25 mins
Four Seasons Resort Maldives at Landaa Giraavaru	5 star	Baa Atoll	Seaplane 30 mins or domestic flight 35 mins
Furaveri Maldives	4 star	Raa Atoll	Seaplane 40 mins or domestic flight 65 mins
Fushifaru Maldives	5 star	Lhaviyani Atoll	Seaplane 40 mins
Gangehi Island Resort & Spa	4 star	North Ari Atoll	Seaplane 20 mins
Gili Lankanfushi Maldives	5 star	North Malé Atoll	Speedboat 15 mins
Grand Park Kodhipparu	5 star	North Malé Atoll	Speedboat 20 mins
Heritance Aarah	5 star	Raa Atoll	Seaplane 40 mins
Hideaway Beach Resort & Spa Maldives	5 star	Haa Alifu Atoll	Seaplane 65 mins or domestic flight 70 mins
Holiday Inn Resort Kandooma Maldives	4 star	South Malé Atoll	Speedboat 40 mins

Hurawalhi Island Resort	5 star	Lhaviyani Atoll	Seaplane 40 mins
Huvafen Fushi Maldives	6 star	North Malé Atoll	Speedboat 30 mins
InterContinental Maldives Maamunagau Resort	5 star	Raa Atoll	Speedboat 35 mins or domestic flight 20 mins
JA Manafaru	5 star	Haa Alifu Atoll	Seaplane 85 mins or domestic flights 95 mins
Joali	5 star	Raa Atoll	Seaplane 45 mins
Kagi Maldives Spa Island	5 star	North Malé Atoll	Speedboat 50 mins or seaplane 20 mins
Kandima Maldives	4 star	Dhaalu Atoll	Seaplane 30 mins or domestic flight 45 mins
Kanuhura Maldives	5 star	Lhaviyani Atoll	Seaplane 45 mins
Kihaa Maldives	5 star	Baa Atoll	Domestic flight 25 mins
Komandoo Island Resort & Spa	4 star	Lhaviyani Atoll	Seaplane 40 mins
Kudafushi Resort & Spa	4 star	Raa Atoll	Seaplane 45 mins or domestic flight 50 mins
Kuredu Island Resort & Spa	4 star	Lhaviyani Atoll	Seaplane 40 mins
Kurumba Maldives	5 star	North Malé Atoll	Speedboat 10 mins
Lily Beach Resort & Spa	5 star	South Ari Atoll	Seaplane 25 mins
LUX* North Male Atoll Resort & Villas	5 star	North Malé Atoll	Speedboat 60 mins or seaplane 20 mins
LUX* South Ari Atoll Resort & Villas	5 star	South Ari Atoll	Seaplane 25 mins
Makunudu Island	4 star	North Malé Atoll	Speedboat 55 mins
Medhufushi Island Resort	4 star	Meemu	Seaplane 40 mins
Meeru Island Resort & Spa	4 star	North Malé Atoll	Speedboat 50 mins
Mercure Maldives Koodoo Resort	4 star	Gaafu Alifu Atoll	Domestic flight 55 mins
Milaidhoo Island Maldives	5 star	Baa Atoll	Seaplane 35 mins or domestic flight 15 mins
Mirihi Island Resort	5 star	South Ari Atoll	Seaplane 30 mins
Naladhu Private Islands Maldives	5 star	South Malé Atoll	Speedboat 25 mins
Nika Island Resort & Spa	4 star	North Ari Atoll	Seaplane 25 mins
Niyama Private Islands Maldives	5 star	Dhaalu Atoll	Seaplane 40 mins
OBLU by Atmosphere Helengeli	4 star	North Malé Atoll	Speedboat 50 mins
One&Only Reethi Rah	6 star	North Malé Atoll	Speedboat 50 mins
OZEN Life Madhoo	5 star	South Malé Atoll	Speedboat 35 mins
Paradise Island Resort & Spa	4 star	North Malé Atoll	Speedboat 15 mins
Park Hyatt Maldives Hadahaa	5 star	Gaafu Alifu Atoll	Domestic flight 70 mins
Reethi Beach Resort	4 star	Baa Atoll	Seaplane 35 mins or domestic flight 35 mins
Reethi Faru Resort	4 star	Raa Atoll	Seaplane 45 mins or domestic flight 50 mins
Royal Island Resort & Spa	4 star	Baa Atoll	Domestic flight 35 mins
Safari Island Resort	4 star	North Ari Atoll	Seaplane 25 mins
Seaside Finolhu	5 star	Baa Atoll	Seaplane 30 mins or domestic flight 40 mins
Sheraton Maldives Full Moon Resort & Spa	5 star	North Malé Atoll	Speedboat 15 mins
Six Senses Laamu	5 star	Laamu Atoll	Domestic flight 35 mins or speedboat 15 mins
Soneva Fushi	6 star	Baa Atoll	Seaplane 30 mins or domestic flight 30 mins
Soneva Jani	6 star	Noonu Atoll	Seaplane 35 mins
Summer Island Maldives Resort	4 star	North Malé Atoll	Seaplane 15 mins or speedboat 50 mins
Sun Island Resort & Spa	4 star	South Ari Atoll	Domestic flight 25 mins
Sun Siyam Iru Veli	5 star	Dhaalu Atoll	Seaplane 35 mins
Sun Siyam Olhuveli Maldives	4 star	South Malé Atoll	Speedboat 50 mins
Sun Siyam Vilu Reef	4 star	Dhaalu Atoll	Seaplane 35 mins or domestic flight 70 mins
Sun Siyam Iru Fushi	5 star	Noonu Atoll	Seaplane 45 mins
Taj Coral Reef Resort & Spa, Maldives	5 star	North Malé Atoll	Speedboat 60 mins
Taj Exotica Resort & Spa, Maldives	5 star	South Malé Atoll	Speedboat 15 mins
The Barefoot Eco Hotel	4 star	Haa Dhaalu	Domestic flight 50 mins
The Residence Maldives Dhigurrah	5 star	Gaafu Alifu Atoll	Seaplane 60 mins or domestic flight 60 mins
The Residence Maldives Falhumaafushi	5 star	Gaafu Alifu Atoll	Seaplane 60 mins or domestic flight 60 mins
The St Regis Maldives Vommuli Resort	5 star	Dhaalu Atoll	Seaplane 45 mins
Vakarufalhi Maldives	4 star	South Ari Atoll	Seaplane 30 mins
Vakkaru Maldives	5 star	Baa Atoll	Seaplane 25 mins
Velaa Private Island	5 star	Noonu Atoll	Seaplane 45 mins
Velassaru Maldives	5 star	South Malé Atoll	Speedboat 30 mins
Velidhu Island Resort	3 star	North Ari Atoll	Seaplane 25 mins or speedboat 90 mins
Veligandu Island Resort & Spa	5 star	Rasdho	Seaplane 15 mins
Vilamendhoo Island Resort & Spa	4 star	South Ari Atoll	Seaplane 25 mins
W Maldives	5 star	North Ari Atoll	Seaplane 25 mins

Meet the experts



Jordan Torrilla

Product & Purchasing Manager,
Classic Collection Holidays

What do you love most about the Maldives?

There are two things for me, the first is travelling by seaplane; I love the sense of adventure and the view of the islands below. The second is being on a truly isolated island. Looking out and seeing no lights on the horizon gives you such a strong feeling of remoteness and I love that.

How many times have you visited the Maldives?

I've been fortunate enough to visit the Maldives on eight separate occasions. I was just 10 years old on my first visit, it was a family holiday and undoubtedly one of the best my family went on. It was my first experience of snorkelling and I absolutely loved it, that is until I saw the silhouette of a reef shark beneath me and signalled to my dad to help me back to the boat!

What essentials could you not travel without?

I'd love to say a book but so often I pack them and don't read them, a bad habit of mine. Realistically, I'd say reef-safe sunscreen, a baseball cap and my camera. I am a keen photographer and it doesn't get much more photogenic than the Maldives.

Describe your perfect island?

Medium sized, as I like to be able to stretch my legs, but I prefer islands without too many facilities. For me the beauty of the Maldives is in the islands themselves. I also like it when islands have plenty of vegetation as it not only looks pretty but allows you to escape from the midday sun!

What are your best three experiences from your trips to the Maldives?

Dining at The Lighthouse Restaurant on Baros Maldives. For me this restaurant encapsulates everything the Maldives should be. It is scenic, romantic and unforgettable – what more could you want? Another of my favourite experiences was during my first visit to the Maldives when I discovered there were no TVs on the island. Nowadays most islands have television and WiFi and everything else you need to stay connected, but for me I love being off-grid and that's why I love islands like Diamonds Athuruga, where whilst still connected, the focus is on enjoying the island for what it is. My third and final best experience would probably be the spa at Huvafen Fushi Maldives. With both overwater and underwater treatment rooms this spa really stands out as one of the best in the Maldives. Arriving at Huvafen Fushi Maldives I was far from a wellness lover but after just a few hours in their spa I was totally converted. I cannot wait to return.





Lizzie Bray

Worldwide Travel Consultant
and Long Haul Specialist,
Classic Collection Holidays

How many islands have you been to in the Maldives?

I have been very spoiled visiting 26 islands, four of them more than once. It's undoubtedly my favourite part of the world. I find it very hard to go anywhere else when I've already found holiday perfection.

What impresses you so much with the Maldives?

My career started at Raymond Blanc's Le Manoir aux Quat'Saisons, a Belmond Hotel where I learned about very high standards of service, cuisine, presentation and décor. My job means I've visited many hotels worldwide but I've never been able to better the Maldives for service, food and beauty on almost every island I've stayed.

Which is your favourite island?

It's difficult to choose just one, so here are two. Gili Lankanfushi Maldives for its barefoot luxury, fine cuisine, exquisite personalised service, and charm. It's also very easy to get to. You take off your shoes after boarding the boat to travel to the island and don't wear them again until it's time to go home. Highlights have to be the dolphin cruise and sleeping under the stars on the rooftop terrace of your villa. I'd also select Huvafen Fushi Maldives for its marine life. Snorkel to see nurse and black-tip sharks drawn to the waters under the overwater Sushi restaurant, Salt. Feed stingrays from the beach. Watch manta rays during breakfast and dolphins during lunch. And don't miss out on a treatment in the hotel's stunning underwater spa.

And the best value for money?

The all-inclusive four star OBLU by Atmosphere at Helengeli is an attractive proposition for those on a budget and I'd recommend the two bedroom Beach Pool Suite for families of four or five. The snorkelling here is incredible. Baros Maldives is at a higher price point, but still represents very good value and is suited to couples mainly of all ages and families with older children are allowed. It's a small yet very sociable property. You can walk around the island very easily and their house reef is a particular highlight.

Which do you think is the best Kids' Club in the Maldives?

For younger and older children Niyama Private Islands offers so many activities and fun things to do. The Den at Soneva Fushi is a big hit with its curly water slide, pirate ship, two swimming pools and cinema. InterContinental Maldives Maamunagau Resort, an IHG hotel, has some excellent activities including painting lessons with a local artist, t-shirt design and printing, time spent planting and learning about fruit and vegetables, cooking, surfing, and snorkelling with the marine biologist.



What have been your most memorable dining out memories of the Maldives?

The lunch menu with paired wines at Anantara Kihavah Maldives Villas' underwater restaurant, Sea, and another lunch at Hurawalhi Island Resort's 5.8 Undersea Restaurant. These are both meals which I will remember for the rest of my life. Many Maldives' properties can arrange private dining and as a special fortieth birthday present I enjoyed the most romantic lantern-lit, sunset dinner for two on the beach at Gili Lankanfushi Maldives. It was the most beautiful surprise.

And some other memorable moments?

The Sunset Water Villa with Pool at Four Seasons Resort Maldives at Landaa Giraavaru. The overwater infinity pool is simply incredible.

What are some fun activities to do in the Maldives that you recommend and wouldn't expect?

Some visitors worry that there might not be enough to do on a holiday to the Maldives. On the contrary, there's more than enough for everyone. Try the ultimate in stargazing at Anantara Kihavah Maldives Villas' Overwater Observatory, or enjoy cinema under the stars. Fly boarding and electric float surfing are some of the more unusual watersports to tackle, and don't miss out on the chance of a submarine trip. Keen divers will enjoy diving with manta rays and whale sharks, and night dives. Yogis will enjoy inhaling and exhaling to the rhythm of the waves with Aerial yoga over either land or sea. Search for a message in a bottle at the LUX* resorts. Alternatively, be on turtle watch for hatchlings and go coral planting with marine biologists.



Frederic Brohez
General Manager,
Soneva Jani

Can you describe the vision and values of Soneva Jani?

Soneva Jani was inspired by the Sanskrit word for wisdom. Our co-founder Sonu Shivdasani wanted the resort to encapsulate luxury in a simple and natural way, and to remain as beautiful as the first day he laid eyes on it. High quality sustainable materials are used throughout. In keeping with the natural look, technology is cleverly hidden away.

Can you describe your resort in your own words and why our customers should come and stay?

Soneva offers experiences that are unique and in keeping with our interpretation of luxury. We feel that luxury is about feeling the sand between your toes, dining under a canopy of stars and disconnecting from technology. It's about reconnecting with the natural environment, while having minimum impact on the natural world and its fragile ecosystems.

What are Soneva Jani's unique selling points?

We enjoy a remote location in the unspoilt Noonu Atoll. Soneva Jani is the lowest-density resort in the Maldives, and is designed to maximise space, privacy, and seclusion for guests. We have the highest levels of hospitality with our Barefoot Butler service. Guests enjoy our signature outdoor rain showers and bathtubs, roofs that retract at the touch of a button, on most of our over-water villas, for sleeping under the clear night skies, and of course, our water slides. We've also an over-water outdoor cinema and observatory, visiting experts from the world of sport, Michelin-starred chefs and wellness practitioners. There are jungle island trails to explore on foot or by bicycle and conservation experiences with our Marine biologist.

How do guests choose to invest their time and money at Soneva Jani?

At Soneva Jani we like to create rare experiences for our guests to enjoy, such as our world-class dining options. Mathias Dahlgren, one of Sweden's most decorated chefs, focuses on modern pescatarian, vegetarian and plant-based dishes and celebrates the best of local ingredients, from seafood caught sustainably in nearby waters, to fruit and vegetables grown in the resort's own organic gardens. We also offer an exceptional wine menu of predominantly organic or biodynamic wines. Wellness is also a priority for our guests. Our spa incorporates massage therapies from around the globe, healing Ayurvedic rituals, high-performance, facial treatments and targeted wellness programmes, as well as private yoga and meditation sessions, personal training and consultations with the resident Ayurvedic doctor.

What do you feel you do to stand out in a destination which is already known for its excellence at hospitality?

Soneva's No News, No Shoes philosophy is all about disconnecting from daily life and truly embracing the luxury of time. Guests have the opportunity to dine in the middle of a private lagoon, take a sunset dolphin cruise or just enjoy an intimate 'no menu' meal from a Michelin-starred chef, in a stunning natural location, with ingredients that were picked that morning. They can snorkel above a swirling feeding frenzy of manta rays or meet local fishermen to learn how to fish sustainably - incredibly unique experiences.

Maldives is at the forefront of climate change, what ecological initiatives are you embracing?

In February 2020, Soneva launched our flagship Soneva Namoonu project. At the heart of the initiative is the desire to reduce; a radical reduction in the volume of plastic arriving on the islands. Recycling and responsible disposal is the second strand of the programme. The third component is to inspire a love of the ocean and the local environment. The belief is that through water sports, education and festivities, children will lose their fear of the ocean and learn to love it. If they love it, they are more likely to protect it. Soneva will always safeguard the beautiful surroundings with which we have been blessed. This is part of our core beliefs and our founding principle.





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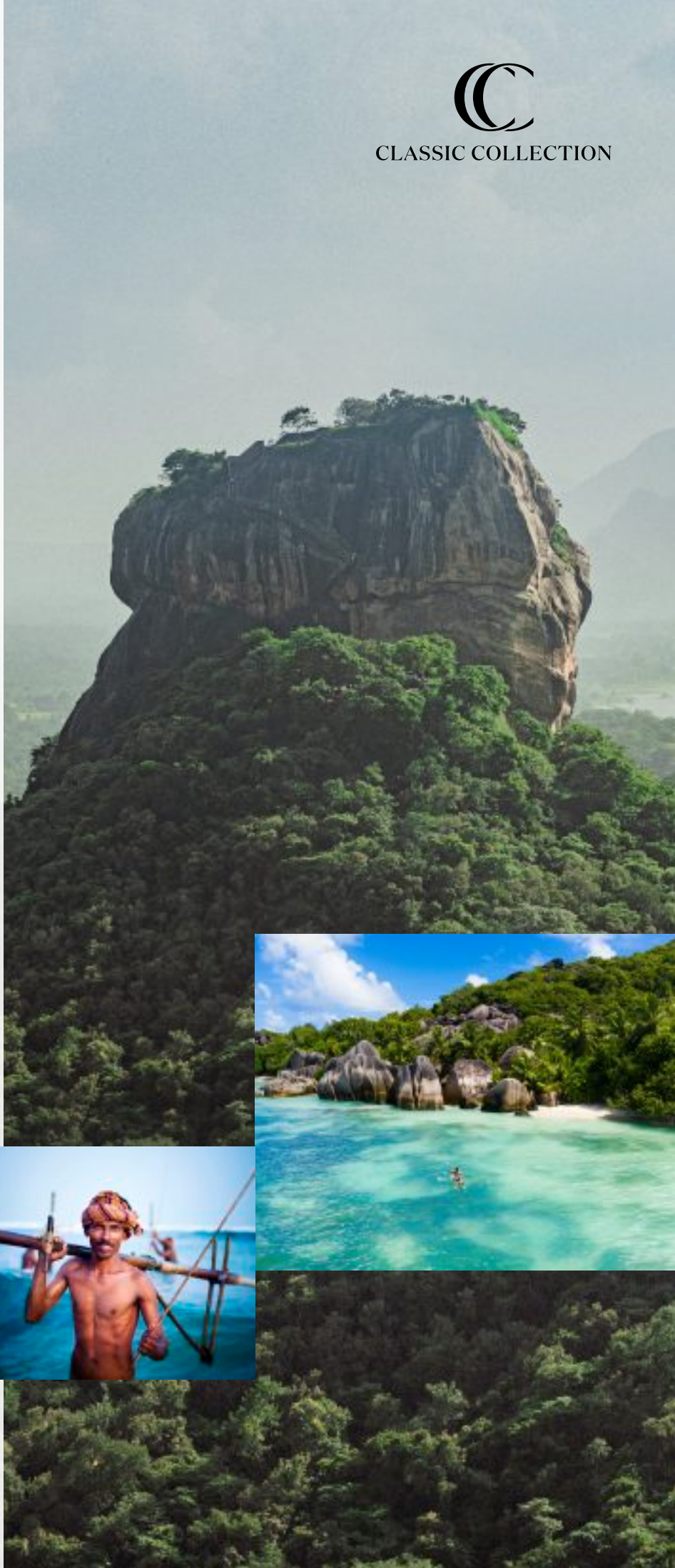
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