



THE MALDIVES

Sunny side of life...



Welcome to Maldives

Sun, sand and sea, a thousand 'Robinson Crusoe' islands, massive lagoons with different depths and infinite shades of blue and turquoise, dazzling underwater coral gardens; a perfect natural combination for the ideal tropical holiday destination.

However there is more to the Maldives than just that

GEOGRAPHY

A string of pearls scattered over the deep blue Indian Ocean - The first glimpse you get of this fascinating atoll- formation confirms two unique aspects of the Republic of Maldives. Not only does it consist of the most beautiful tropical islands, but 99% of its 90.000 km² is covered by the sea. 1190 islands are spread over 26 atolls, ringlike coral formations enclosing a lagoon, which gives the Maldives its unique paradise-like appearance. They stretch for about 820 km from North to South, 130 km at the widest point and do not exceed a length of 4.5 miles or an altitude of 6 feet above sea level. No more than 200 islands are inhabited, the rest includes the 99 tourist resorts and uninhabited islands, some of which are used for drying fish or other agricultural activities. The capital Malé, the seat of government and the centre of trade, commerce, business, health and education, is located in the middle of the atoll chain, a small island buzzing with the sounds and activities of about 120'000 people which is about one third of the population.

History

The early history of the Maldives is enshrined in myth and legend. Archeological records indicate that the first visitors to the Maldives stepped ashore over 5000 years ago. According to folklore the Maldives was first colonized by an Indo-Aryan race between the fourth and fifth centuries B.C.



CLIMATE: Warm and humid, temperatures average between 27 - 33 °C year round. Humidity average %: 79%.



PEOPLE

The people of the Maldives are its own unique character. They are a small, kindred society unified by common history, the Dhivehi language, and the Islamic faith. The ties and obligations felt by individuals to their community, to their President, to a whole nation reflects the tradition of strong family ties. Intelligent, as well as devout, the people of the



Maldives are tolerant and respectful of each other and of visitors to the country. Great respect is felt for the head of the national 'family' as well as for the head of each household. The family unit is strong.



CULTURE

Though performances of traditional music and dance are not everyday events, there is a contemporary Divehi culture which is strong and adaptive, despite foreign influences which range from Hindi movies and Oriental martial arts to Michael Jackson. Western fashions, pop music and videos are visible in the capital, but on public occasions, like the beginning and end of Ramadan, the celebrations always have a distinctly Maldivian touch.

A bodu beru means a big drum, and gives its name to the best known form of traditional music and dance. It's what tourist resorts put on for a local culture night, and it can be quite sophisticated and compelling. Dancers begin with a slow, nonchalant swaying and swinging of the arms, and become more animated as the tempo increases, finishing in a rhythmic frenzy. There are four to six drummers in an ensemble, and the sound has strong African influences. Contemporary local rock bands often perform at resorts where they do credible covers of the usual old favorites.



ART & CRAFT

The beautifully carved tombstones in some of the old cemeteries and the fine stone carving of the Hukuru Miski in Male' bear witness to the intricate skills of Maldivian stone carvers of the past. Maldivians are deft craftsmen producing beautifully crafted pieces mostly out of what is available locally. Although many of the skills are now a thing of the past several skills have been passed on from generation to generation and lives on even today.

Wooden Lacquer ware

Perhaps the most distinctive of the Maldivian handicrafts, these are almost exclusively produced in Thulhaadhoo in Baa Atoll. Liye Laajehun as it is called Dhivehi involves the process of shaping, and hollowing out pieces of wood to form beautifully crafted boxes, containers and ornamental objects. Made from local funa (Alexandrian laurel) which grows abundantly throughout the country.



TOURISM

The first tourist resort was opened in 1972. At present there are 97 resorts and a large number of cruise vessels that operate in the tourism industry. The number of tourist arrivals reached 429,700 in the year 2000 and is expected to grow by 8% during the year 2001. About 79% of tourists originated from Europe, mainly from Italy and Germany, United Kingdom, France and Switzerland.

However tourist arrivals from Asia is becoming increasingly important comprising 17 percent of all arrivals in the year. Japanese tourists continue to dominate the Asian market with 54% of the total arrivals from Asia in 1999.



Overview of a tropical resort

A typical tourist resort in the Maldives is a hotel on its own island. It is the only establishment on the island and everyone on the island either works at the resort or is a guest.

Islands are typically 800 by 200 metres in size and are formed of sand and coral to a maximum height of about 2 metres above the sea. They are covered in coconut palms and bushes. In addition to its own private beach, which goes all the way round the island, each island has its own encircling "house reef" which serves as a coral garden and natural aquarium for SCUBA divers and snorkelers. The shallow waters enclosed by the house reef serves as a large natural swimming pool and protects swimmers from the ocean waves and strong tidal currents outside the house reef.

The only buildings on the typical resort are the rooms and suites reserved for use by its guests, the buildings housing restaurants, cafes, shops, lounges, bars, discos, diving schools and the like. A part of island also contains staff lodgings and housing for support services such as power generators, laundry, catering and sewerage plant. The visitor may find it unusual that they see no local people or villages on the resort island. It may be possible to take excursions to other islands to see local living conditions and culture. Also, many of the resort staff are not from the Maldives.

Most resorts offer air conditioning, hot and cold fresh water around the clock. A toilet, mini bar and private telephone in the guests' rooms is more the norm than the exception. They also have restaurants, coffee shops and bars. On-island shops offer a wide range of products, especially souvenirs and artifacts.



A wide variety of activities ranging, for example aerobics, volleyball and table tennis, are on offer for the conventional sports enthusiast. Aquatic activities starting from the more conventional wind surfing and water skiing to parasailing are also on offer.







Dive Sites

There are thousands of dive sites; so numerous that you can literally swim over from one to the other. Only a small percentage of the Maldives reefs have ever been dived. Each dive site has its unique characteristics in form, fauna and flora, the currents and other elements that shape and mould them. Resorts concentrate on dive sites within a one or two-hour radius, while cruise boats cover more ocean and therefore a greater variety of sites.



MALDIVES



Geography

The atolls of the Maldives are formed from coral structures. The atolls are part of a greater structure known as the Laccadives-Chagos Ridge, which stretches over 2000 kilometers. The islands are low lying with the highest point at approximately eight feet above sea level. Ring-shaped reef structures form the atolls and these reefs provide the natural defense against wind and wave action on these delicate islands.



Island Voyage

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

Q: *How do I get to the resort?*

A: The resorts transfers operates by prior arrangements, by fast dhoni boat (local), speedboat, service, Seaplane or Domestic plane from Male' International Airport. This service is obligatory to book at the time of reservation. Note that the transfer will be shared along with other guests arriving on the same flight. Please note the transfer will be shared along with other guests arriving on the same flight.

Q: *Will someone meet me at the airport?*

A: Once you have cleared Customs and walked through departures you are likely to see a lot of Hotel Representatives waiting for guests. Please look for the Island Voyage Paging board and/or our Island Voyage Airport counter number is 32 for assistance. We have staff at the airport to assist with all Scheduled resort guest arrival and departure flights.

Q: *How far is the airport arrival hall from the transfer departure point?*

A: Both areas are only 50 metres apart. The ferry pier for speedboat transfer is right outside the arrival hall and our airport representatives will be there to assist you.

Q: *What should I know about the validity of my Passport?*

A: If a passport's expiry date falls within 90 days after arrival one cannot extend his stay beyond the passport expiry date. We recommend you have a six month grace on your passport as the 90 days is subject to the final decision of the Immigration officer.

Q: *What is the currency on the island?*

A: Your account will be shown in US Dollars. Major international credit cards are also accepted; namely Visa, MasterCard, and American Express in some resorts.

Please note; we are unable to accept US dollars, which are marked, torn or damaged in any way due to the strict controls of the Banks within Maldives.

Q: *Is there an ATM machine on the island to cash out?*

A: ATMs are located at a few places on the capital island of Male' and also at the Airport passed the departure area. These ATMs usually accept Visa and MasterCard cards. Please note that there is no ATM on the resort island.

Q: *What is the Time difference?*

A: Maldives is five hours ahead (GMT +05:00) of Greenwich Mean Time (GMT).

Q: *Can I get Internet access on the island?*

A: Wireless Internet access is available in resorts reception and at bar area near reception in the most of the the resort. Nonetheless please note that signal quality may be subject to weather conditions and location.



Q: *What are the options for international roaming? Would you suggest one service provider in particular?*

A: Both GSM 900 and GSM 1800 mobile phones work in the Maldives. Please enquire to your service provider for more information and for applicable roaming rates. The Maldivian GSM network has developed very quickly and there is good reception even in the more remote area. If you have a GSM phone you can use it as you do normally.

Q: *What if I have specific dietary requirements?*

A: Please feel free to let us know in advance any specific dietary requirements or allergies you may have and we will do our best to assist you.

Q: *Is tap water safe to drink on the resort island?*

A: The water on the most of the resorts are desalinated, it is quite safe to drink it if boiled.(i.e. for tea and coffee) and brushing your teeth and showering. For drinking cool or room temperature water, we would suggest you drink the purified water or mineral water - available to buy.

Q: *What clothing should I bring?*

A: In your Island resort you can easily be walked around and most of our areas have sand floors and walkways ensure you have a real sense of barefoot getaway. You may wish to walk barefoot or wear a simple pair of flip-flops or sports shoes, heeled shoes might not be adequate. In terms of attires, light natural fibre clothing and a minimum of mid-length shorts and T-Shirts are to be worn in most of the resorts restaurants.

Q: *Is there anything else you will recommend us to bring?*

A: An extra bottle of suntan lotion, hats, sunglasses, water socks (reef walkers) and any common mosquito repellent. Most of the aforementioned products are available from the resort's boutique nevertheless.

Q: *What water sport activities do the resorts have?*

A: The most of the resorts are fully equipped with windsurfs, pedal boats and canoes, catamarans, kayaks, lcoal dhoni boat and speedboat. You may contact the island reception for more details and charges.

Q: *Can I dive from the resort?*

A: Maldives Islands are known as a prime destination for diving enthusiasts. Whether you are an avid diver or a beginner, any of Maldives resorts have professional dive schools with multi-lingual instructors and conduct courses -Dive Centre has something to suit everyone.

Q: *I am a qualified diver and want to bring my own equipment.*

A: Our dive centre is happy for guests to use their own equipment. However, please be aware of additional luggage charges that may be imposed by your airline carrier.

Q: *Can I bring coral back to my country?*

A: The deliberate damage to living corals around any resort in Maldives is strictly proscribed and guests may be subject to fines if caught or reported. Guests should be very careful when snorkelling around the reef to ensure they do not stand on corals. Departure luggage is also screened at the airport and if corals are detected Customs officers might legitimately open said luggage for further check.



Q: What marine life can I expect to see at the resort?

A: Resort's features an excellent house reef that almost circles the resort.

Each island is surrounded by some of the most astonishing marine life and coral found in Maldives.

Some of the fabulous species that you might see when snorkelling the house reef include:

Fish

There is an amazing diversity of sea life in the Maldives archipelago, with corals and over 2,000 species of fish, ranging from colourful reef fish to reef sharks, moray eels and a wide variety of rays: Manta Ray, Stingray and Eagle Rays. Around the house reef you can expect to see Powder Blue Surgeon Fish, Parrot Fish – so called for their sharp beaklike teeth which they use to chip away at the corals, Gold Stripped Emperor, Blue Lashed Butterfly fish and of course...Nemo.

The Coral Reef

Around 70 different species of colourful coral reefs make up the flora of this underwater city with more than 700 species of fishes and other forms of marine life taking the role of the fauna. Reefs prevent soil erosion. And with their brilliant hues and sculpted shapes corals add beauty, enticing people to dive underwater to appreciate some of nature's most magnificent creations. Corals constitute a very delicate ecosystem, which requires our tender care and nurturing.

You may also anticipate seeing Sea Turtles including Loggerhead, Green Olive Ridley and Hawksbill. These can be found swimming around the reef or in open seas, however, green sea turtles, are one of very few creatures that eat the sea grass that grows on the sea floor. Sea grass must be kept short to remain healthy, and beds of healthy sea grass are essential breeding and development areas for many species of fish and other marine life. A decline or loss of sea grass beds would damage these populations, triggering a chain reaction and negatively impacting marine and human life.

Some of the fabulous species that you might see whilst diving:

North Male Atoll

This area was one of the first to be discovered for its scuba diving delights and comprises some of the oldest and most popular dive sites in the Maldivian Island, including Gaathugiri, also known as Banana Reef. You can expect breathtaking topography with magnificent rock faces, numerous caves, steep drop offs and precipitous overhangs. The marine life is just as overwhelming with sharks, manta rays, black snappers, grouper, schooling banner fish, large morays, squirrelfish, soldier fish and Maldivian grub fish.

Whale Sharks

Probably one of the most unique species of fish is the Whale Shark. Most would assume due to their name and features that they are from the shark family. The Whale shark is a slow moving filter feeding shark that is the largest living fish species. It can grow up to 12.2 metres in length and can weigh up to 13.6 tonnes. They are found in the tropical and warm oceans and can live up to 70 years. The species are thought to have originated about 60 million years ago. Although whale sharks have very large mouth, they feed mainly, though not exclusively, on plankton, microscopic plants and animals. Despite its enormous size this specie does not pose any significant danger to humans. It is a frequently cited example when educating the public about the popular misconceptions of all sharks as “man-eaters”. They are actually quite gentle and can be playful with divers. Divers and snorkelers can swim with this giant fish without any risk apart from unintentionally being struck by the shark’s large tail fin.



Manta Rays

There are few sights more awe-inspiring for scuba divers than watching manta rays performing their graceful somersaults. These magnificent creatures are frequently seen feeding alone or in small groups near the surface or eventually near shore waters or coral and rocky reefs. Manta rays are strong pelagic swimmers; possibly able to cross the open ocean and so often host one or more clinging remora, or sucker fish. Remoras have their first dorsal fin modified into a sucking disc. While the remoras do not harm their host directly (apart from sore skin where attached), mantas do use more energy in swimming with them.



Q : Do you have a spa at the resort's?

A: Yes. SPA is now available every resort of Maldives, where guests will discover a world of absolute indulgence, sheer pampering and well-being.

Q: What are the shopping and sightseeing opportunities?

A: Besides featuring its own boutique, the resort's operates frequent excursions. Like the capital of the Maldives, including Chaandhanee Magu and Majeedhee Magu areas, is a fascinating place for shoppers offering garments, cosmetics, jewellery, and plethora of handicrafts. Since Male' is of rather intimate size you can get around easily and reach either end of the island by taxi. or to the nearby fishing village, uninhabited islands or local Island - to see the Maldivian way of slow life.

Q : Is it possible to arrange wedding ceremonies at the resort's?

A: Yes, different Island or some island resorts of Maldives offers options to those who wish to tie the knot on a pristine sandy beach surrounded by lazy palms and sparkling azure waters or even underwater in some resorts. You may contact our reservations for choices of wedding packages.

Please be aware that our wedding ceremonies are celebratory ceremonies (blessings) and as such are not officially or legally recognised. The weddings we conduct are ceremonial in nature and are NOT legally binding here in Maldives. Also the set up and the whole function is arranged in a traditional Maldivian style which is obviously different from traditional Christian ceremonies.



The Sunny Side of Life

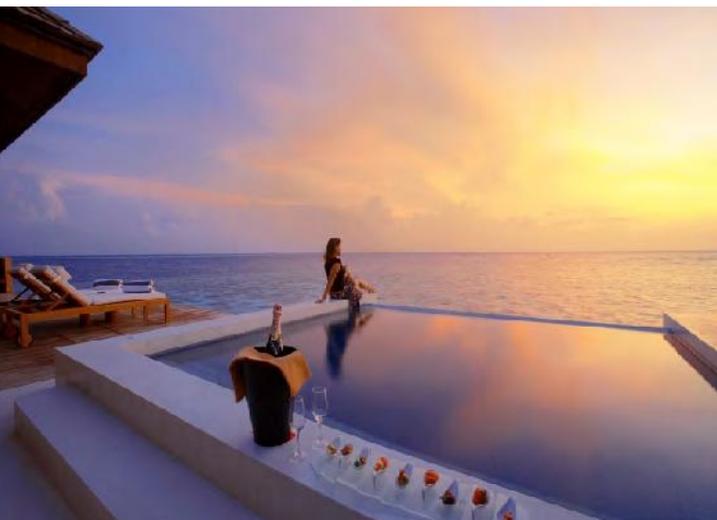
Specks of emerald green enveloped by dazzling turquoise waters like scattered beads in the ocean; white powdery beaches, tall palms lean on towards the sea, crystal white sands giving way to crystal clear waters, shades of turquoise blend flawlessly with deeper hues of blue; pristine coral reefs and some of the most incredible underwater life on our planet. Rising from the deep blue of the vast expanse of the Indian Ocean are more than a thousand islands and thousands more reefs that form the Maldives.

Major Industries	Tourism & Fisheries
Currency	Rufiyaa
Electricity	240 AC



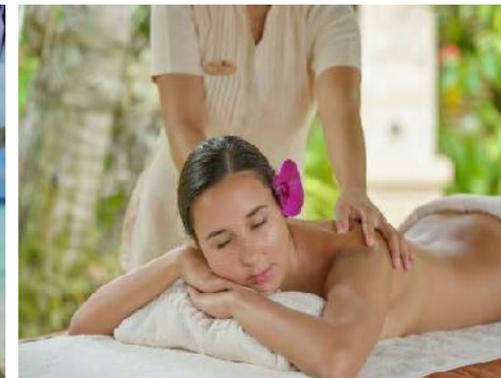
FLIGHT DURATION TO MALDIVES

Washington D.C., USA	- 18 hrs, 30 mins	Hong Kong, China	- 6 hrs, 10 mins
London, UK	- 10 hrs, 45 mins	Beijing, China	- 7 hrs, 20 mins
Rome, Italy	- 9 hrs, 15 mins	Singapore, Singapore	- 4 hrs, 30 mins
Berlin, Germany	- 9 hrs, 40 mins	Delhi, India	- 3 hrs, 15 mins
Paris, France	- 10 hrs, 30 mins	Tokyo, Japan	- 9 hrs, 40 mins
Dubai, UAE	- 3 hrs, 45 mins	Canberra, Australia	- 11 hrs, 50 mins
Moscow, Russia	- 8 hrs, 15 mins	Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia	- 4 hrs, 10 mins





Swimming Pool





Maldives 
always natural

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