

## **MALDIVES: WE ALL NEED TO ESCAPE**

WHEN TO VISIT: DECEMBER TO MARCH

Welcome to the Maldives, where sands are white as the smiles of the locals, where fish swim happily in the warm waters of the Indian Ocean, where the weather is a dream, and the deep rays of the sun wait to engulf you their arms.

In ancient times, the shores of the Maldives welcomed lost travellers. Still welcoming, these shores remain, providing a tranquil haven for visitors.

### **Country at a Glance**

Maldives has deep blue seas, turquoise reefs, white sandy beaches and palm trees. It is also a place full of character, where its people have long spent their days languishing in the very essence of idyll living. While it is the perfect place to sit on a beach and watch a sunset with a cocktail balanced on your hand, it is also a geographical marvel, knowing that there are thousands of fish swimming around the vivid corals just a few feet away from where you sit.

Time: GMT+5hrs

Capital island: Male'

Total islands: 1,190

Inhabited islands: 200

Resort islands: 105

Population: Approx. 350,000

Major industries: Tourism and Fishing

Currency: Rufiyaa (USD 1 = MRF 15.42)

Electricity: 240 AC

### **Location and Geography**

The Maldives lies in two rows of atolls in the Indian Ocean, just across the equator. The country is made up of 1,190 coral islands formed around 26 natural ring-like atolls, spread over 90,000 square kilometers. These atolls structures are formed upon a sharp ridge rising from the ocean, making way for their secluded uniqueness.

Each atoll in the Maldives is made of a coral reef encircling a lagoon, with deep channels dividing the reef ring. A string of islands take their places among this atoll ring; each island has its own reef encircling the island lagoon. The reefs of the islands, alive with countless types of underwater creatures and vibrant corals, protect the islands from wind and wave action of the surrounding vast oceans. This

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unique structure of reefs and channels makes navigation almost impossible for the passer-by without sufficient information about these waters.

Ninety-nine percent of the Maldives is made up of sea. The people of the islands are widely dispersed across the atolls, with about 200 inhabited islands. About 90 islands are developed as tourist resort and the rest are uninhabited or used for agriculture and other livelihood purposes.

## Things to Do

### Diving Maldives:

The warm seas of Maldives have high visibility throughout the year, with water clear enough to see the passing fish as far as fifty metres away at times. Add to that the marvellous formation of over 3000 coral reefs and the free flowing tides of the monsoons. The result of these perfect conditions have created one of the world's richest diving coral reef areas.

Over a thousand species of fish and other underwater creatures inhabit the Maldivian waters. The monsoon tides of the Indian Ocean create a collection of small marine creatures as well as microscopic plant cells. This in turn creates a hub for all kinds of underwater species who gather in these waters lured by the abundance of food. In the Maldives you will get to see everything. From tiny shrimp and groups of colourful swimmers to the magnificent mantas and sharks, a careful eye will give you enough to enrapture you for a lifetime.

The best thing is that you need not be a professional diver to enjoy the Maldives. All resorts and safari boats give you basic to advanced training using well-monitored diving facilities of a high standard. Even the most reluctant diver can enjoy the beauty of Maldivian underwater life on a drift dive with the guidance of experienced dive instructors. A dive in a house reef is equally rewarding, all you need to do is swim a few minutes from shore. Due to the countless number of reefs found among the 26 atolls in the Maldives, all you need to do is travel 15 to 60 minutes by boat to get to a different dive spot every day.

Dives in the Maldives usually take place along a faru (reef), a thila (a submerged aquarium like reef, on a channel where the atoll meets the ocean, or on a wreck. Night diving is particularly beautiful as is a macro dive that lets you see tiny, interesting and usually disregarded creatures up close and personal.

## Watersports

In a place that is more sea than land, there is no end to the fun things you do in the water. Maldivians swim for recreation, they play water polo with their friends at weekend picnics, they surf addictively. The visitor is not excepted: every single resort of the Maldives has a sports centre that provides a range of watersports activities.

These centres are well equipped with masks and snorkels and boards of varying sizes, whether you want to spend the day snorkeling and meeting glances with wide-eyed fish, or feeling the wind in your hair on a windsurfer or catamaran. Some centres offer courses for beginners and advances windsurfers and sailors. You could also chose to parasail, kayak, kite-surf, water-ski, and jet-ski.

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**Surfing:** Maldives is a mecca to surf-enthusiasts from all over the world, with the southwest monsoon bringing with it massive swells, especially from June to September. The sizes range from 3 – 8 feet. There are several well-known surf breaks in North and South Male' Atoll. Resorts near these breaks are perfect for surfing aficionados, as you can get the full Maldivian experience while riding the waves to your hearts content. The

lesser-known, but amazing surf breaks further away from Male' atoll can be accessed by specialised surf cruises (often referred to as surfaries) offered by cruise operators in the country.

## **The Maldives Honeymoon**

If a honeymoon is meant to be a celebration of love in an intimate, secluded, and most importantly, beautiful setting, then the Maldives is the world's best backdrop for all these things. There are endless ways to let the magic of the islands dazzle you on your holiday as a couple. A dinner under the stars with the occasional flicker of candle light to bring you back into the real world, a daring getaway to a nearby uninhabited island all by yourselves for the whole day, or just lazing around in your private bungalow watching the endless turquoise waters while you are treated to an spa treatment in the room.

You could choose to get to know each other through a swim around a house reef with a mask and fin, or dive among the beautiful, vibrant reefs. It is an experience you will relive for days after you get back home. Indulge in some lighthearted competition on a night fishing trip by seeing who catches more. You will not forget the amazing boat trip you make at sunset before anchoring at a suitable fishing spot. It is as if nature plays with the colours of the setting sun just to ensure that you remember this day, this moment, and this love for the rest of your life.

Your honeymoon need not be a once in a lifetime experience either. You will relive the honeymoon over and over again, every time you come back to these magical islands.

## **Spa and wellness**

Just lying on a deserted beach of a Maldivian island, taking in nothing but the continuous rhythm of the waves, the sea salt in the air and feeling the soft white sand on your bare feet is enough to sooth your senses. Each island with its green vegetation and secluded setting is a natural spa in its own right, designed to soothe, caress, and heal.

Spas set in the Maldives, thus, are perfected as the ultimate getaway cocoons in the middle of the vast Indian Ocean. Traditional healing methods, that have been passed on for generations as family secrets by the hakeembe (healing experts), have been incorporated into special spa programs in the Maldivian islands.

The types of treatments vary with each spa but you can get almost any world-class treatment in a Maldivian spa. Every Maldivian resort has a spa; some of them nestled deep within thick vegetation, others sitting in solitude on a wooden jetty built on the lagoon, and some even built underwater.

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Maldivian virgin coconut oil produced using age-old extraction techniques which is known among islanders for its hydrating and healthful elements is now used in some resort spas, as is the local favourite gandhakolhi leaf which is blended to treat almost any minor ache, and the traditional Maldivian sand massage used by islanders to cure muscle and joint pains.

## **Relax and unwind**

The Maldives is considered by many to be the premier tropical beach destination in the world and the best place to relax and unwind from the hectic and chaotic lifestyle of the modern world. The Maldives is an archipelago nation of 1,190 islands in the Indian Ocean renowned for its natural pristine beaches and island environment.

With over 100 different island resorts to choose from each island has its own distinct feel, character. The wide range of accommodation suits many budgets to cater for all. However, whichever island you visit in the Maldives all of them are blessed with perfect coral beaches, lush tropical vegetation, warm shallow waters, fantastic hotel facilities and outstanding service that you would only expect to find in the world's best tropical beach destination. There are only a few places in the world that have this combination of the unique turquoise sea and powder white sand with an all year round climate described as "a never ending summer".

As soon as you step onto your resort island, you will experience an overwhelming sense of calm and tranquility that is a unique characteristic of visiting these beautiful islands. The stresses and pressures of modern life instantly become a distant memory enabling you to totally relax, rejuvenate and unwind like no other place. The resorts combine the isolation of being nestled on the equator in the Indian Ocean and being specifically designed and built with modern facilities and technology with one core purpose; to guarantee that the guests experience the most relaxing perfect holiday anywhere in the world. A holiday to your own Maldivian island is the perfect paradise escape...

The one island one resort concept of the Maldives means that no uninvited people can get onto your Maldivian island reassuring you that you and your loved ones can totally unwind and relax in safety and in total privacy. Every-one who visits the Maldives say that "it is like being in a perfect dream". We hope to welcome you soon.