India

GREAVES TOURS LLC



MALDIVES

Planning guide

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How do you describe a country where the ocean isn't the backdrop — it's the address?

Maldives

The Maldives is made up of 1,192 coral islands spread across 26 natural atolls in the Indian Ocean. From tiny white-sand islands and turquoise lagoons to vibrant coral reefs, its geography is as striking above the water as it is below it. Whether you want to explore colorful house reefs or relax on a palm-shaded island, the Maldives offers an easy rhythm of sea, sand and unhurried luxury.

When you feel at home in the Maldives' relaxed pace, there are small surprises: a manta ray gliding through the water, bioluminescent seas on the right night, or a fisherman returning with the day's catch. This ocean nation offers plenty of ways to look beyond the postcard and discover its natural and cultural character.



why MALDIVES?



For over 2,500 years, the Maldives has been a stop along the Indian Ocean's ancient trade routes, attracting Arab, Indian, Chinese, and Persian sailors with its cowrie shells, coir rope, and dried tuna. Settled by seafaring people from South Asia, the islands were Buddhist for centuries before converting to Islam in 1153 CE, a faith that still shapes daily life. Portuguese, Dutch, and British influences have left their marks, but the sea has always defined the Maldives. With about 99% of its area covered by water and most land barely above sea level, the Maldives is the lowest country on Earth. This unique geography makes it both fragile and captivating.

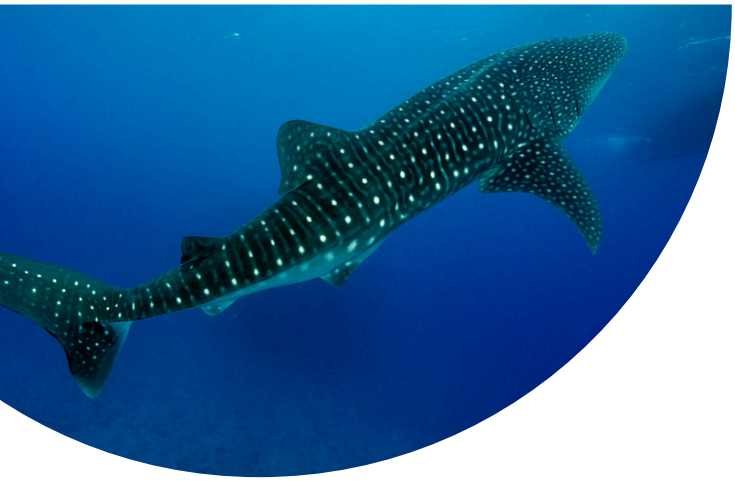
LANDSCAPE
and marine life



The Maldives is known for its beaches, but its true wilderness lies beneath the surface. Coral reefs supporting more than 1,000 fish species, along with whale sharks and manta rays, make its waters remarkably rich in marine life. It is a paradise for anyone ready to explore beneath the waves.

The Atolls

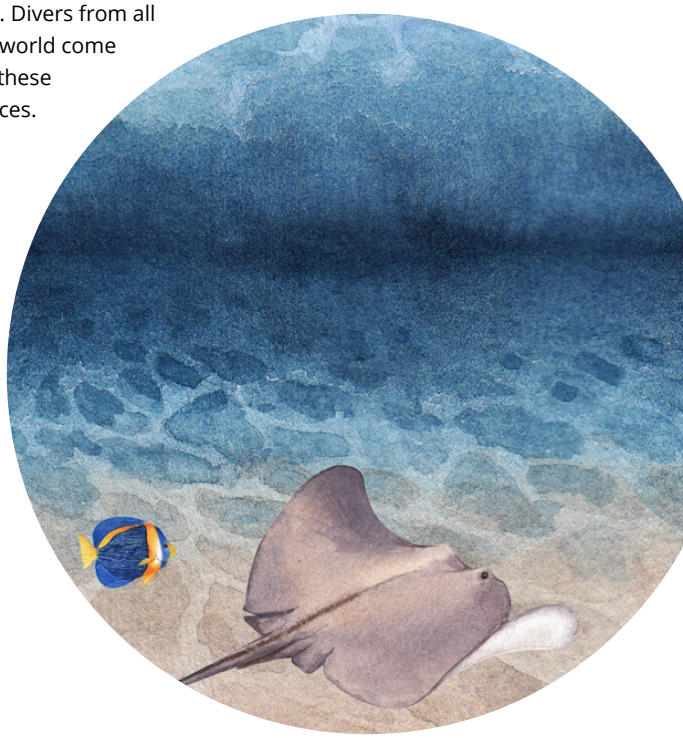
The Maldives consists of 26 natural atolls, ring-shaped coral reef systems formed around submerged volcanic foundations. These atolls contain 1,192 low-lying coral islands spread across the Indian Ocean, spanning the equator. Together, their reefs, islands, and turquoise lagoons create the distinctive geography that defines the Maldives.





North Atolls

The northern atolls, formed around ancient volcanic peaks now deep underwater, are known for frequent manta ray and whale shark sightings. Divers from all over the world come here for these experiences.



House Reefs

A house reef surrounds nearly every inhabited and resort island. These coral gardens are just steps from the shore and are often the best places to see turtles, reef sharks, and colorful fish.



Hanifaru Bay

Hanifaru Bay, located in Baa Atoll and protected as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, is home to one of the world's largest gatherings of manta rays. Each summer, hundreds come together here to feed.

South Atolls

The southern atolls of Addu and Fuvahmulah are farther from the capital and see fewer visitors. These islands cross the equator and offer cooler waters, chances to see hammerhead sharks, and a slower, more local way of life.





ARCHITECTURE

Maldivian architecture is shaped by its island environment and abundant natural materials. Traditional buildings used coral stone, timber and coconut-palm thatch, reflecting the resources available on the islands. The country's historic mosques are particularly remarkable: built from finely cut coral stone and decorated with intricate carving, woodwork, lacquer and calligraphy, they are outstanding examples of the Maldives' distinctive Indian Ocean architectural heritage.

In the modern era, the Maldives has developed another instantly recognizable architectural language: the overwater villa. Adapted to the country's shallow lagoons and resort-island setting, these villas have become an iconic expression of contemporary Maldivian resort design, placing the ocean at the center of the experience.













1. Overwater Villa Architecture
2. Traditional Island Housing
3. Coral Stone Mosque Architecture
4. Dhoni Boat Craftsmanship
5. Thatched Palm-Roof Design

CULINARY

Maldivian food centers on three main ingredients: fish, coconut, and starch. Tuna, caught daily by pole-and-line fishermen, is served smoked, dried, curried, or raw at almost every meal. Coconut appears in curries and sambals, while breadfruit, taro, and rice round out the dishes. Trade with India, Sri Lanka, and the Arab world has added spices like chili, cardamom, and rosewater, but the sea still shapes the flavors: briny, smoky, and perfect for sharing during long, relaxed meals.



Popular Maldivian Foods


Kulhi Boakiba


Mas Huni


Roshi


Garudhiya


Fihunu Mas


Kukulhu Riha


Foni Boakiba


Bondibaiy


Gulha


Kavaabu

Breakfast

Mas Huni – Shredded smoked tuna with grated coconut, onion, and lime, scooped up with warm roshi

Roshi – A soft, thin unleavened flatbread eaten at nearly every meal

Kulhi Boakiba – A dense, spiced fish cake, baked until golden

Lunch/Dinner

Garudhiya – A clear, fragrant tuna and lime broth with rice, chili, and onion

Fihunu Mas – Whole reef fish, marinated in spices and grilled over coconut husks

Kukulhu Riha – A rich, coconut milk-based chicken curry

Rice & Bread

Bai – Steamed white rice, the everyday base of a meal

Bambukeylu Curry – Breadfruit slow-simmered in coconut milk and spice

Foni Roshi – A lightly sweetened roshi, eaten with jam or honey

Desserts

Bondibaiy – Sweetened rice pudding flavored with rose water and saffron

Foni Boakiba – A dense coconut-and-semolina cake, baked for special occasions

Short Eats (Hedhikaa)

Gulha – Deep-fried dumplings filled with spiced tuna and coconut

Kavaabu – Deep-fried tuna-and-rice fritters

Bajiya – Pastry parcels filled with tuna, onion, and coconut, deep-fried until crisp

Snack food

Hedhikaa Platter – A spread of bite-sized savory snacks, traditionally served with sai (black tea) in the afternoon

ART *and culture*

Maldivian art and craft, shaped by centuries of trade and settlement, is small in scale but rich in detail. Bodu Beru drumming and dance, lacquered woodwork, and finely woven reed mats all developed on small islands with limited resources. This makes the skill involved even more impressive. Music, weaving, boatbuilding, and calligraphy are still practiced today much as they were generations ago.

Boduberu is the heartbeat of Maldivian music, with a strong drum rhythm that starts slow and builds into an energetic, dance-filled climax. Craft traditions are just as important: lacquered wooden vessels in bright reds and blacks, finely woven reed mats called thundu kunaa, and handcrafted dhoni boats made with skills passed down for generations. These crafts are still practiced today much as they always have been.

Bodu Beru Drum Making





Liyelaa Jehun

traditional Maldivian lacquer work

Thaana Calligraphy





Thundu Kunaa weaving

Miniature boats / dhonis

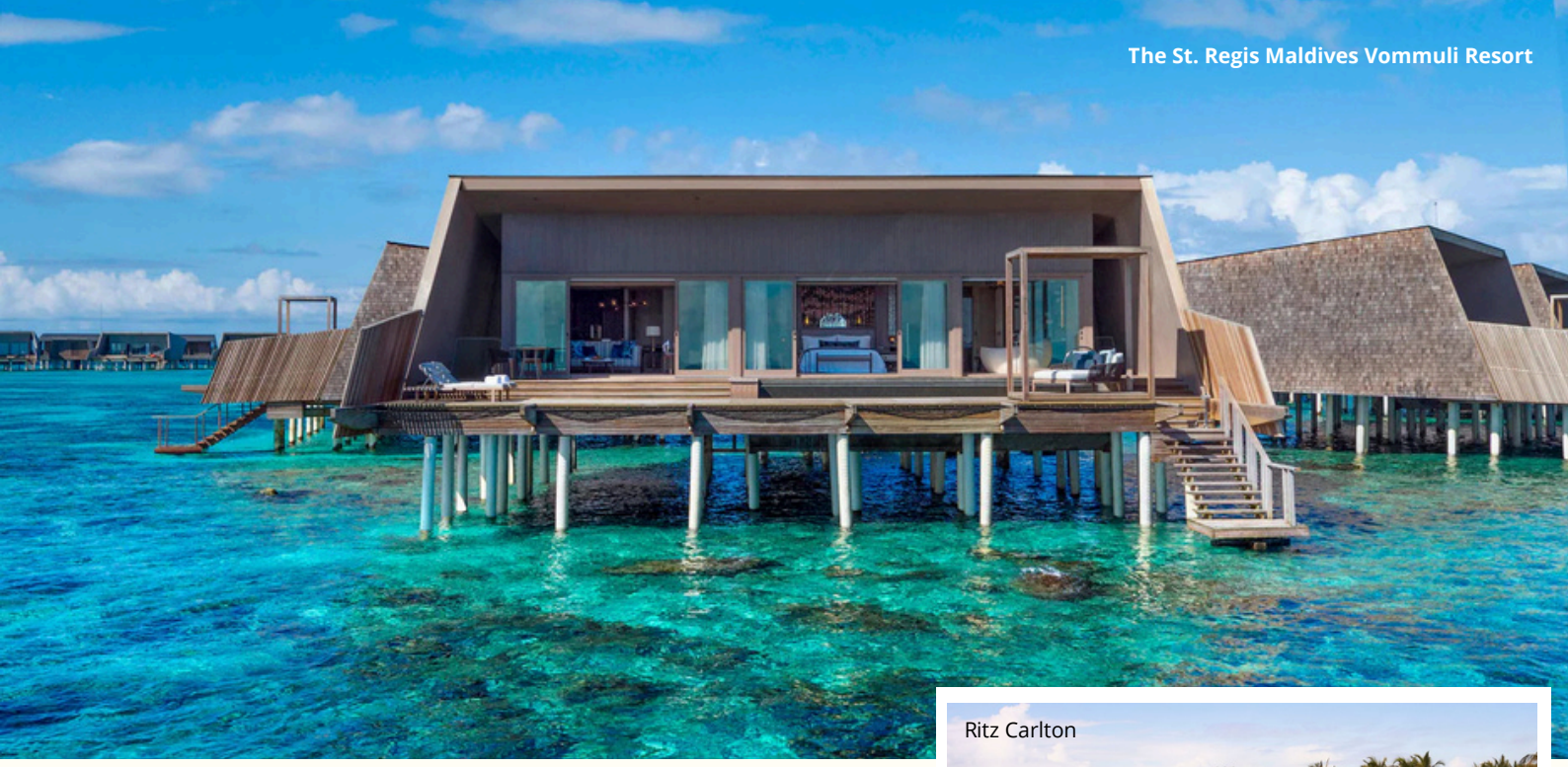




Kunaa Reed Weaving

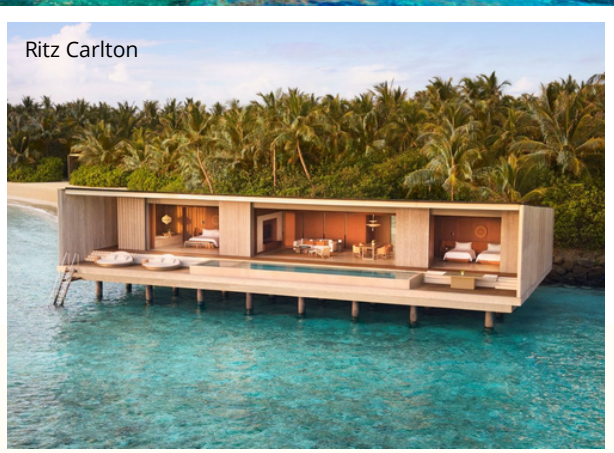
HOTELS *and resorts*



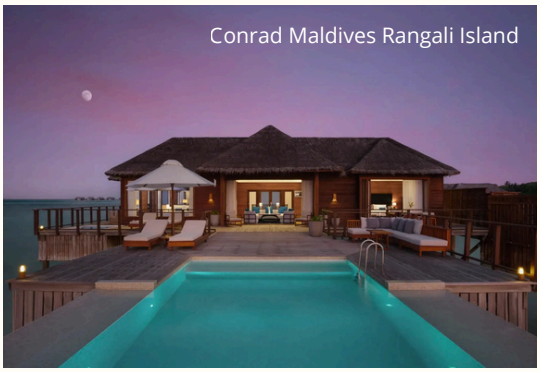

The St. Regis Maldives Vommuli Resort


Taj Exotica Resort & Spa


The Soneva Fushi


Ritz Carlton

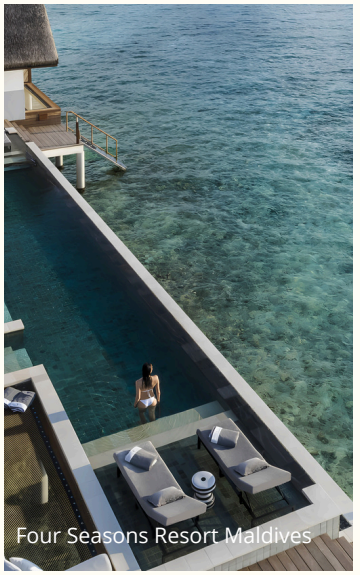

Soneva Jani


Conrad Maldives Rangali Island


JW Marriott Maldives Resort & Spa


Anantara Dhigu Maldives Resort


JOALI Maldives


Four Seasons Resort Maldives

Plan your trip to

MALDIVES

with us

Resort Islands vs. Local Islands

The Maldives follows Islamic law, which shapes a few practical rules every traveler should know before arriving.

- Alcohol is legal only inside licensed resorts and liveaboard vessels, it cannot be brought into the country, bought, or consumed on any inhabited local island, including Malé.
- Resort islands have no dress restrictions, including on their beaches; local islands require modest dress (shoulders and knees covered), and swimwear is limited to a designated “bikini beach” where one exists.
- Since 2009, guesthouses on local islands have opened up a lower-cost, more community-based way to experience the Maldives, a genuinely different holiday from a private resort island, worth considering for clients who want to meet Maldivians rather than only see the water from a villa deck.

Entry Requirements

Passport

- All travelers must have a passport valid for at least six months beyond their arrival date in the Maldives.
- At least one blank page is required for the entry stamp.

Visa on Arrival

- Nationals of most countries receive a free 30-day tourist visa on arrival, no advance application needed.
- A confirmed hotel or resort booking and proof of onward travel are typically required at immigration.

Resort Transfers

- Most resorts require a speedboat or seaplane transfer booked in advance from Velana International Airport, confirm timings with your resort before you arrive.

Banking & Currency

- The local currency is the Maldivian Rufiyaa (MVR), though US dollars are accepted almost everywhere, from resorts to local shops. Most resort stays run on a card and dollar basis, so you rarely need local currency.
- Banks in Malé are typically open Sunday to Thursday, roughly 8am to 3pm, though resort concierge desks can usually handle currency needs directly.

Climate and Weather

- The dry season runs from roughly December to April, bringing lower humidity, calmer seas, and the most reliable sunshine, the most popular time to visit.
- The wet season, from May to November, brings higher humidity and short, heavy monsoon showers, though downpours rarely last long and are often followed by clear skies.

Getting There

The Maldives is remarkably accessible from India, with nonstop flights from several major cities, while travellers from the USA can connect comfortably through leading international hubs. Your journey ends at Velana International Airport in Malé, where your resort transfer begins.

From India

- Nonstop flights to Malé are available from Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Kochi and Thiruvananthapuram, with services operated by Air India, IndiGo and Maldivian depending on the route. Flight times range from around 1 hour 15 minutes from Thiruvananthapuram and Kochi to just over four hours from Delhi.
- Travellers from Chennai, Hyderabad and other Indian cities can connect through major gateways, with routing selected according to the most convenient schedule and your resort's transfer requirements.

From the USA

- There are currently no nonstop flights between the United States and Malé. Most journeys involve one connection through a major international hub, with popular options including Doha on Qatar Airways, Dubai on Emirates and Istanbul on Turkish Airlines; Abu Dhabi is another available routing.

There's no single best route, it depends on your home city, travel dates and resort. Your Greaves advisor will match you to the most convenient connection and coordinate your arrival at Velana International Airport with your resort's seaplane or speedboat transfer window. Where possible, we arrange a single connected itinerary rather than separate tickets, so your onward journey is protected if an earlier flight is delayed.

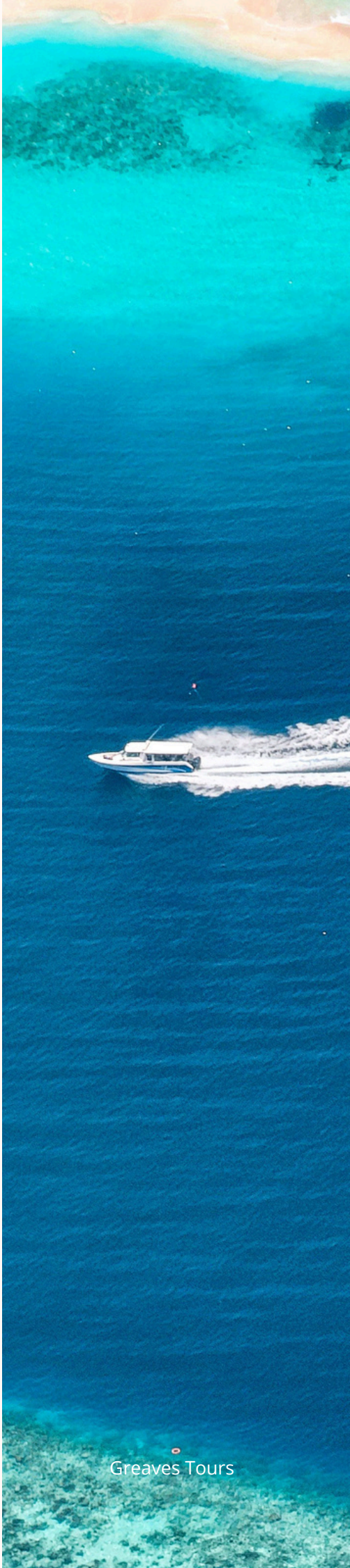
PACKING LIST

- [ ] Valid Passport and Visa
- [ ] Vaccination certifications
- [ ] Travel Insurance
- [ ] Travel Cards
- [ ] Camera
- [ ] Worldwide Travel Plug
- [ ] Phone Sim Tray Opener
- [ ] Other essential Tech/Gadgets and accessories
- [ ] Pair of sunglasses
- [ ] Wide-brimmed hat/Scarf
- [ ] Reef-safe sunscreen
- [ ] Light Layers
- [ ] Modest clothing
- [ ] Comfortable pair of walking shoes/sandals
- [ ] Swimsuit
- [ ] Travel pillow
- [ ] Backpack/Daypack
- [ ] Natural Insect repellent
- [ ] Personalized First Aid
- [ ] Toiletries
- [ ] Moisturizing Hand Sanitizer
- [ ] Reusable water bottle

Maldives

BUCKET *list*

- [ ] Sunset drinks on a sandbank
- [ ] Swim in a bioluminescent "sea of stars"
- [ ] Snorkel a house reef at sunrise
- [ ] Dine at an underwater restaurant
- [ ] Swim alongside a whale shark
- [ ] Watch a live Bodu Beru drum performance
- [ ] Take a scenic seaplane transfer
- [ ] Sunset cruise on a traditional dhoni
- [ ] Private yoga session on the beach at dawn
- [ ] Visit a local inhabited island
- [ ] Dive with manta rays at Hanifaru Bay
- [ ] Dine under the stars
- [ ] Try your hand at traditional dhoni sailing
- [ ] Sample fresh hedhikaa at a local café
- [ ] Go big-game fishing for tuna
- [ ] Visit a local island's coral-stone mosque
- [ ] Watch a dhoni race during a local festival
- [ ] Join a home chef for a cooking demonstration



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INDIA

8th Floor, Alt-F Coworking Space, Noida
Expressway, Sector 142,
Noida, Uttar Pradesh 201304

Email: sales@greavesindia.com

USA

1098 S Milwaukee Ave Suite
200 Wheeling, IL 60090

Email: sales@greavesindia.com

WANDERLUXE

195 Fairfield Ave, Unit 2D, West
Caldwell, NJ 07006

Email: hi@wanderluxedestinations.com

Contact your preferred travel advisor or call (800) 318-7801 - toll free in America