

Maldives Travel Guide

The best things to see and do



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1. Why you should visit the Maldives

The Maldives are the premier beach destination on our planet. They have some of the best white sand beaches, gorgeous turquoise waters and fantastic snorkeling and diving. You can stay on a local island or enjoy pure luxury on one of the many resort islands, maybe in an overwater bungalow or in a beach bungalow. On the Maldives' 1,192 islands in 26 atolls, you can get away from it all or sunbathe on busy beaches.



The choice is yours and the memories you make will last a lifetime.

The word paradise is frequently used when describing the Maldives - and I cannot think of any other way to describe them. No wonder, the Maldives are a popular wedding destination and honeymoon spot for newlyweds.

Unfortunately, planning a Maldives vacation is difficult. There are just too many perfect islands and resorts waiting for you. And you can spend anywhere from \$200 to way over \$10,000 per night.

In this Maldives Purple Travel Guide, we will tell you what you need to know to visit the Maldives and we help you find your perfect vacation spot.

To help you find out what best fits you, we have added lots of photos and links to google maps locations and additional reviews. Join us to explore the best things to see and do in the Maldives.

This is not an in-depth Maldives guide. You can buy in-depth Maldives guides from the big travel guide companies. Our goal is to help you Make Memorable Moments on a relaxing Maldives trip and help you build the perfect itinerary for your trip. For that purpose, we have added lots of photos so that you see what you will experience and make an educated decision if these places are for you.

Please also check out the other exciting destinations and travel guides on our **Backpack and Snorkel [website](#)**.

2.1 Disclaimer

In this guide we are doing our best to give you the most accurate information. Over time, however, prices, times, and even attractions are subject to change. Therefore, I and backpackandsnorkel.com cannot be held responsible for the experiences of users while traveling. I strongly suggest that you write or call the attractions you plan to visit for confirmation when you make your travel plans.

Also, please stay alert, be aware of your surroundings and keep an eye on your belongings. Pickpockets and other criminals can easily ruin even the best planned vacation.

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3. General Information about the Maldives

With 1,192 islands in 26 atolls, of which about 200 islands are inhabited, the country is spread over 35,000 square miles (90,000 km²), making the Maldives the smallest country in Asia. Of the 35,000 square miles, only 115 square miles (298 km²) are land. The population is about 515,000, with almost half (212,000) living in the capital Malé (=island of Malé and nearby islands that administratively belong to Malé).

The average ground-level elevation is 4 ft 11in (1.5m) above sea level and the highest point lies at 16.75 ft (5.1 m) above sea level.

The country's name consists of the word Malé (capital city) and Dives (=islands), meaning the 'Islands of Malé'.

Maldivians, however, call the country 'Dhivehi Raajje' in their local Dhivehi language.

The Maldives have some of the best beaches, snorkeling and diving in the world and people come here for just that. Besides beach and water activities, there is not much else to do in the Maldives.



3.1.3 Malé

[Malé](#) is a noisy city with an extremely high population density, lots of tall buildings, lots of motorcycles and cars, and many stores, restaurants, banks and ATMs. The streets are narrow and the air is polluted by all the traffic. Most streets are one way and only the few main roads are wide enough to allow two-way traffic. Tourists should dress according to the [Islamic Dress code for Tourists](#), but unfortunately quite a few tourists don't. Businesses typically work from Sundays to Thursdays and close five times a day for prayers.

Malé does not have any bikini beach. At the public beaches, men and women are supposed to bathe fully clothed with everything covered from the neck (including the shoulders) to at least above the knees. Short sleeves are OK.

Offensive behavior (e.g. insulting Islam, nudity, the display of gay or lesbian affection in public, etc.) is strictly forbidden and can lead to an arrest and a fine or worse.



3.2 Do I need a Tourist Visa for the Maldives

Visa requirements can change at any time. We encourage you to check if you need a visa [here](#).

At the time of writing:

- a **Tourist Visa** is granted for all nationalities **on arrival** to the Maldives. As such, a foreigner travelling to Maldives as a tourist does not require pre-approval for the visa. However, the person must satisfy the basic entry requirements to get immigration clearance upon arrival.
- within 96 hours before flying to the Maldives and leaving the Maldives, travelers must fill out a free IMUGA [Traveller Declaration](#)
- Business travelers will need to apply for a visa.
- Dogs are not allowed in the Maldives.

The basic entry requirements are as follows, but do not guarantee entry:

1. A passport or a travel document with Machine Readable Zone (MRZ) with at least 1 month validity. (*Passengers with an extended validity in their passports are not allowed to enter.*)
2. A complete travel itinerary including return journey confirmed tickets, with a prepaid confirmed hotel booking at a registered hotel, and provide proof of financial means for sufficient funds to support the stay in Maldives, or hold a pre-approved visa sponsorship approved by Maldives Immigration.
3. Entry requirements to their onward destinations; for example, the visa and passport validity.

3.5 Etiquette in the Maldives

The Maldives are an Islamic country. And as such, certain behavioral and dress codes should be observed by visitors in Malé and on the islands inhabited by Maldivians. Fortunately, Maldivians are tolerant with visitors' choice of clothes.

The resort islands on the other hands are very westernized and western customs are followed as long as Muslim staff does not get offended.

Nudity, however, is not allowed anywhere in the Maldives.

3.5.1 Business Opening Times

Businesses that are not engaged in tourism activities typically operate on Islamic week schedules, meaning they are open for business from Sunday to Thursday and close from Friday to Saturday.

Friday afternoon prayers are an important part of Islamic religion and you will see people gather to socialize before and afterwards. Many businesses close for prayer five times a day for 10-15 min.

3.5.2 Greeting

Men typically shake hands when they meet or greet each other. Maldivian women typically do not shake hands and Maldivian men will typically not shake hands with women.

Traditionally islanders greeted people who visited them with a fresh coconut drink. This tradition is still very much alive on the resort islands and many hotels on local islands where newly arriving guests are often welcomed with a drink.

Men should not be topless, unless they are at an island resort or bikini beach. Pants should ideally cover the knees, but it is OK if the knees are showing. In mosques or shrines, however, the knees must be covered. Short sleeves are OK. As for women, nudity is illegal for men, too.

You must remove your shoes in certain parts of many hotels, or if you get invited to a private home.

3.5.5 Left Hand – Right Hand

The left hand is considered dirty! So, whenever you are greeting someone, accepting, or giving something, only use your right hand. Some Maldivians eat with their hands. As foreigners, you will be provided with utensils. In establishments where food is eaten by hand, you should not touch the food with your left hand and do not hand plates, cups, or utensils to anyone with your left hand. When eating with your hands, you can use your left hand to cut food with utensils. The above behaviors should also be observed by left-handed people.

Maldivians are tolerant and you will not get in trouble if you don't abide by these rules. However, trying to play by the rules shows that you are respecting Maldivian customs.

3.5.6 Conflict

People usually go out of their way to avoid conflict. If you show anger or even aggression, people may not deal with you. So, if you get agitated while complaining about something, people may think you are crazy and avoid you.

3.6 Currency of the Maldives

The currency of the Maldives is the Maldivian Rufiyaa (MVR). You can find the exchange rate [here](#).

Island Resorts and many hotels, restaurants, and stores on the Local Islands accept payments in US Dollars (cash and credit), some even accept Euros.

Unless you shop at small stores on the Local Islands or stores in Malé that have no credit card machines, you may not need to exchange any money into MVR.

3.7 Can I use credit cards in the Maldives?

The major credit cards Visa and Mastercard are accepted in hotels, many restaurants, and stores in Malé.

Outside of Malé, as far as I know, all Island Resorts accept credit cards and many hotels do too. There are, however, some hotels that only accept cash payments (often in US Dollars and sometimes also in Euro).

If you want to buy something in the small stores on the Local Islands, then you will need to pay cash with MVR, sometimes US Dollars are accepted too. Just be advised, that many Local Islands have no ATMs, so you will need to get MVR in Malé or change them at your hotel at a non-favorable rate.

3.8 Climate of the Maldives

The Maldives have a tropical monsoon climate with a wet and a dry season.

In the capital city of Malé, September through December are the rainiest months, while February is the driest month.

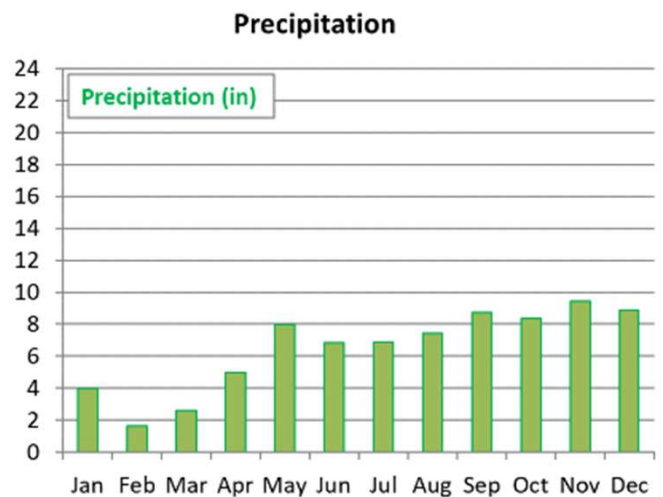
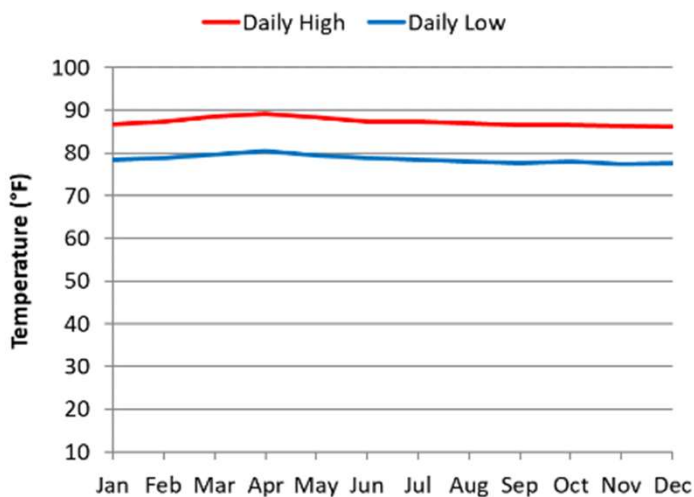
	Average days with rain per month	Average precipitation per month
wet season April through January	10-16	5-16 in (127-240 mm)
dry season February and March	6-9	1.6-2.6 in (41-66 mm)

The average daily high and low temperatures are nearly constant throughout the year with a daily high of 86F - 89F (30C – 32C) and a daily low of 78F – 80F (25C – 27C).

The relative humidity is typically between 76% and 81%.

The average water temperature is between 82F (28C) and 86F (30C).

The climate that you can expect when you visit the Maldives is shown here:



3.8.1 Best time to visit the Maldives

The best month to visit the Maldives is February. February has the lowest amount of rainfall and excellent snorkeling and diving conditions. Unfortunately, February has some of the highest room rates in the Maldives.

Since stays in overwater bungalows in luxury resorts can easily cost more than US\$1,000 per day in February, the potential of rainy days should be considered.

High Season in the Maldives

The high season in the Maldives frons from December through April and hotel rooms are the most expensive from December through February.

February and March have the lowest rainy days and excellent snorkeling and diving conditions.

The weather in December can still be unpredictable and you should count on rain and sometimes heavy rain in December. The chance of rain decreases in January, but February and March are dryer. The wind starts to pick up in March, marking the start of the surfing season.

3.13 Highlights of the history of the Maldives

- Sometime during 3,300 BC – 1,300 BC: historians believe that people live in the Maldives and practice Hinduism
- around 500 BC: Settlers likely from southern India and Sri Lanka arrive and establish Buddhism as their religion
- 300 BC: The first records of Sri Lankans emigrating to the Maldives
- 362 AD: The Maldivians send presents to the Roman emperor
- 1153 (or 1193): Sultan Muhammad Adil converts the Maldives to Islam
- 1558: The Portuguese establish a small garrison in the Maldives and try to convert the inhabitants to Christianity
- 1573: The conversion to Christianity is met with strong resistance and the Portuguese are driven out of the country. This event is now commemorated as National Day.
- 17th century: The Maldives are a sultanate under the protection of the Dutch rulers of Ceylon (Sri Lanka)
- 1796: The British expel the Dutch from Ceylon and make the Maldives a British protectorate
- 1887: The Maldives officially accept the British protectorate for external affairs and protection, but retain autonomy over their internal affairs
- 1932: The Maldivian sultanate gets its first democratic Constitution, and puts much power into the hands of British-educated reformists instead of the Maldivian rulers. As a result, angry mobs publicly tear up the Constitution

- 1953: the First Republic is declared and the sultanate suspended. A revolution breaks out while the president is in Ceylon for medical treatment. After his return he is nearly beaten to death
- 1954: The first Maldivian president's health deteriorates and he dies. The sultanate is re-established and the British military has a strong influence over the islands
- 1956: England is allowed to establish an airfield on the southernmost atoll and employ hundreds of Maldivians
- 1957: The new prime minister calls for a review of the airfield agreement with England
- 1959: The three southernmost Maldivian atolls who are benefiting economically from the British airfield fear economic loss and secede from the Maldives and form an independent state
- 1960: the independent state is dissolved after warships arrive from Malé. England is allowed to continue using its military bases for 30 years
- 1965: The Maldives get full political independence from England. The sultan switches his title and is now king of the Maldives
- 1967: The Maldivian parliament votes to become a Republic
- 1968: The Maldives become a republic after the Maldivian population overwhelmingly votes to become a republic in a referendum
- 1969: The former king of the Maldives dies
- 1970s: Tourism develops in the Maldives and transforms and boosts its economy

- 1972: The first resort welcomes its guests
- 1976: The British military closes its facilities in the Maldives, and the market for dried fish, an important export good, collapses
- 1978: The Maldivian president flees to Singapore with millions of stolen dollars from the treasury
- 1980: Supporters of the ex-president stage a coup d'état, but fail
- 1983: Supporters of the ex-president stage a coup d'état, but fail after the Indian military intervenes
- 1988: Supporters of the ex-president stage a coup d'état, but fail after the Indian military intervenes
- 2004: An earthquake in the Indian Ocean causes a tsunami which devastates the Maldives
- 2008: a new constitution is approved and the first direct presidential elections are being held
- 2011 – 2018: Political unrest, contested and annulled elections dominate the political situation
- 2018 and 2023: Maldivians elect a new president

4. How to decide where to stay in the Maldives

Of the 1,192 islands in the Maldives, about 200 are inhabited. Some are Local Islands with a Maldivian population, and some are Resort Islands that are only occupied by one resort.

The Maldives are as close to a paradise as it gets, and there are almost no wrong choices on where to stay. Because there are 200 inhabited islands, it can be an arduous task to choose the perfect place for your vacation. Below, we will provide you with various options and firsthand information about places we have visited in order to help you Make Memorable Moments on a relaxing vacation in the Maldives.

4.1 Malé

Malé is a busy and noisy city that tourists typically only use as a stopover before they leave for other Local Islands or Resort Islands or before they depart the Maldives.

As a typical 1-day stopover place, the most important requirements for hotels are typically:

- Close to the airport: Malé is a small island, and the airport can be reached with a short taxi trip from anywhere. On the northeastern side of the island is the MTCC Airport Express ferry terminal ([map](#)) that connects Malé with the airport.
- Airconditioning: Malé is hot during the daytime and at night. Airconditioning is a must for most travelers.
- Wifi: Most hotels have wifi nowadays. Some hotels offer free wifi, while others charge for it.
- Close to sights, restaurants, stores, and beaches: Malé is only 1.25 miles (2 km) x 0.9 miles (1.4 km) and most points can easily be reached on foot. Some hotels rent bicycles and, if it is raining, you can always hire a taxi. There are only public beaches and no bikini beaches on Malé and thus, sunbathing and swimming should be done fully clothed – no bikinis, no bare chests.

A hotel that fits the above requirements is hotel [Summer Beach Maldives](#).

4.2 Local Islands

The most important requirements for hotels on the Local Islands are typically:

- Close to the harbor or airport: Almost all Local Islands are small enough that you can get everywhere by walking or by bicycle, which some hotels provide. Hotels will typically pick you up from the harbor or airport where your speedboat or flight arrives.
- Close to the bikini beach: The Local Islands are small enough that you can get everywhere by walking or by bicycle, which many hotels provide. The bikini beaches on some islands are huge and in some cases you may need to walk for 0.5 miles (800 m) or more to get to the farthest point.
- Airconditioning: The Maldives are hot during the daytime and at night. Airconditioning is a must for nearly all travelers.
- Wifi: Most hotels have wifi nowadays. Some hotels offer free wifi, while others charge for it.
- Close to sights, restaurants, and stores: The bikini beach beaches are probably the only attraction that is worth mentioning on the Local Islands and they can be reached on foot, as the islands are small. The same thing is true for stores if there are any. Some islands have hotels and restaurants where you can eat, some smaller islands may not have any restaurants.

Therefore, when you book, pay close attention to the meal options that your hotel offers and the price. Most people will either book full board or all inclusive, but some people will skip lunch to save money.

- Solitude: Some people like busy beaches, some like solitude – on many islands it is easy to have almost the whole bikini beach for yourself or maybe share it with less than 10 other people.
- Snorkeling, diving: Good snorkeling right off the beach is available in many Maldivian islands. Many hotels offer boat tours and there are diving tours on some islands.

There are many Local Islands and, unless you are specifically looking for tours to specific attractions (whale encounters or specific diving spots), our recommendation is to not stress about finding the best atoll or island. The Maldives are so beautiful, that you will find paradise anywhere outside of Malé.

Two islands and hotels that fit the above requirements are:

- [**Azoush Tourist Guesthouse on Fulhadhoo**](#). This island has one of the best bikini beaches in the Maldives (a claim from Lonely Planet that I fully support), few visitors and good snorkeling right off the beach. Wifi is free but not very fast, and accommodation with full board was below US\$150 per night at the time of writing. Excursions are available through the hotel and often cost upwards of US\$100 per person. Kayaks are available for rent.
- [**Thundi Village & Spa on Maalhos**](#). This island has excellent snorkeling. The reef with a steep drop starts a few feet from the beach and there were no notable currents. The only downside is that the portion of the reef that is suitable for snorkeling is only 1,000 ft (300 m) long, so it may get repetitive after a few days. There is a good but small bikini beach (500 ft (150 m) long), and comparably few visitors. Wifi is free and fast, and full board accommodation was below US\$150 per night at the time of writing. Excursions are available through the hotel and often cost upwards of US\$100 per person.

4.3 Resort Islands

The most important requirements for Island Resorts are typically:

- Type of accommodation: Overwater bungalows (singles or duplexes), beach bungalows (singles or duplexes).
- Price.
- Views: Resorts can be expensive and views on an ugly seawall (that protects the islands from erosion) or industrial areas can put a damper on an otherwise perfect vacation. Before you book a specific room in a resort, take a closer look at google maps or talk to the resort to identify if any seawalls or industrial areas on nearby islands will be visible from your room.
- Wifi: Most resorts offer free wifi, while some apparently still charge for it.
- Restaurant variety.
- Activities: excursions, massage and wellness, fitness.
- Solitude: Some people like busy resorts, while others prefer less busy resorts.
- Snorkeling, diving: Some resorts have beautiful house reefs and offer good snorkeling right off the beach, while others have dying reefs or mediocre snorkeling. Some resorts have access to sunken ships, most resorts offer a diving center and offer various diving tours.

There are many Resort Islands and, unless you are specifically looking for tours to specific attractions (whale encounters or specific diving spots), our recommendation is to not stress about finding the perfect resort. The Maldives are so beautiful, that you will find paradise anywhere outside of Malé.

5.2 Beaches and Snorkeling in Fulhadhoo

Tourists visit Fulhadhoo because of its beaches. In fact, Lonely Planet listed Fulhadhoo in its 100 Best Beaches of the World of 2024 as the only beach in the Maldives, which rightfully crowns it the best beach in the Maldives.

Fulhadhoo also has some good snorkeling.

Even during the high season, the island never gets very busy and you can typically have wide stretches of beach for yourself.

The two main beaches are Bikini Beach in the western part of Fulhadhoo and Locals Beach in the east.



1 = Harbor

2 = [Azoush Guesthouse](#)

3 = Jungle path to [Bikini Beach](#)

4 = [East \(Locals\) Beach](#)

- = [Bikini Beach \(blue\)](#)

- = Sharp Corals (black)

- = Dangerous Currents (red)

5.2.1 Bikini Beach

Bikini Beach is a 0.5-mile (800 m) long gorgeous stretch of white sand lined with palm trees and other trees on the south-western side of the island.



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5.2.2 Locals Beach

Locals Beach is located on the eastern side of Fulhadhoo. Especially the north-eastern side is gorgeous, but unfortunately there is a little bit of trash.



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Communication with the hotel before our trip was easy and they always responded quickly – typically within a few hours.

Long story short: We would stay here again.



6. Exploring Maalhos and its Excellent Snorkeling

6.1 Maalhos

Maalhos is part of the Southern Maalhosmadulhu Atoll, which administratively belongs to the Baa Atoll.



- 1 = [Male](#)
- 2 = [Fulhadhoo](#)
- 3 = [Maalhos](#)
- 4 = [Centara Grand Island Resort & Spa Maldives](#)

The island has a population of about 500 people and there is no ATM, but credit cards are widely accepted at the time of writing. There are several stores and restaurants on the island, and even a souvenir store. Due to its compactness, everything is within a short walk from each other.

6.1.3 Restaurants in Maalhos

Maalhos has several restaurants that are open for lunch and dinner.



1 = [Thundi Village & Spa](#)

Restaurants

2 = [Rooftop by Moonshell](#)

3 = [Cafe Pink Rose](#)

4 = [Vaataru Cafe](#)

[Other restaurants](#)

5-8 = [Stores](#)

Rooftop by Moonshell

([map](#), [reviews](#), [website](#), [menu](#))

This is probably the best restaurant in Maalhos. While Moonshell is a hotel, they have a restaurant that is open to everyone on their rooftop.

Seating is either on a patio or inside an airconditioned room – the air conditioning did, however, only work on some of our visits.

The restaurant has a wide selection of Maldivian and international dishes (not all are available every day, however), and innovative milkshakes.

We liked the flavor and selection and made this our most-visited spot for lunch, as the other meals were included in our hotel room rate.



6.2.1 Bikini Beach

The Bikini Beach is beautiful, but small – it is only 400 ft (120 m) long.

Bikini Beach faces north and there is shade from the trees at the back of the beach. Because the beach is fairly short, you will either need to share the shady areas with others or camp out on the sand under full sunshine.



6.2.4 Snorkeling on North Beach

The North Beach in Maalhos has some of the best snorkeling right off the beach in the Maldives.

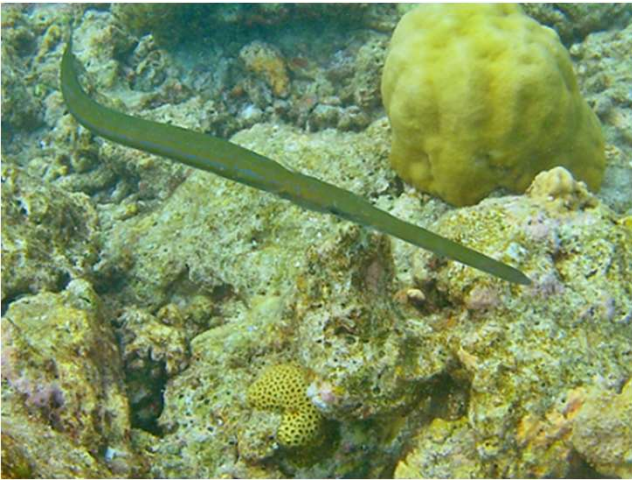
The water is turquoise for the first 10-30 ft (3-10 m). As the slope is fairly steep, you can swim close to the beach. After the turquoise area, the water turns dark blue. This is where the reef falls off to depths of 100 ft (30 m) and more. The drop-off is where the best snorkeling and diving is. You can snorkel almost the entire length of the north coast of Maalhos. There is usually very little current and the water is clear.

Snorkeling is typically good almost until the area where the Maalhos Swing is located.



- = good snorkeling (red)





6.3.1 Thundi Village & Spa

([map](#), [reviews](#), [website](#), [book](#))

When we arrived at the harbor, we were greeted by one of the managers of the Thundi Village & Spa, who then walked with us to the hotel, while our luggage was driven to the hotel on a golf cart. The walk is less than 5 min.

After the welcome drink, she gave us an orientation and swiped our credit card.

The location of the hotel can't be beat. Bikini Beach starts about 160 ft (50 m) from the main hotel entrance. There is a dive center and swings and tables.

The hotel provides two free bottles of water in the room, free water, coffee and tea during breakfast and a free large bottle during lunch and dinner.

Breakfast and dinner are buffet style. As there are several restaurants on Maalhos, we decided to only pay for Half Board and have lunch elsewhere.

The rooms are spacious, and beautifully decorated. The water pressure is excellent and there is daily housekeeping.

Fast free wifi is available on the property.



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The map below shows you the location of the Centara Grand Island Resort & Spa and the layout of the resort.



- 0 = [Seaplane Landing Pad](#)
- 1 = [Villas and Overwater Bungalows](#)
- 2 = [Bars](#)
- 3 = [Restaurants](#)
- 4 = [Snorkeling, Diving, and other water sports](#)
- 5 = [Beaches](#)
- 6 = [Fitness Center](#)
- 7 = [Souvenir Store and Spa Cenvaree](#)
- 8 = [Infinity Edge Pool](#)
- 9 = [Camp Safari Kids' Club](#)
- A = [The Club](#)

Reethi Muraka Overwater Villas

The Reethi Muraka Overwater Villas are one of the best deals at Centara Grand Island Resort & Spa. They are stand-alone overwater bungalows and they only have space for two adults. You enter the bungalow and go into the large bedroom with a king-sized bed in the center. The view from the bed is over the wooden deck and water either on some other bungalows for the northern bungalows or the water sports area (which limits the privacy) for the southern bungalows.

The bed is equipped with a mosquito net, which is not really needed as the island and each room is treated against mosquitoes daily.

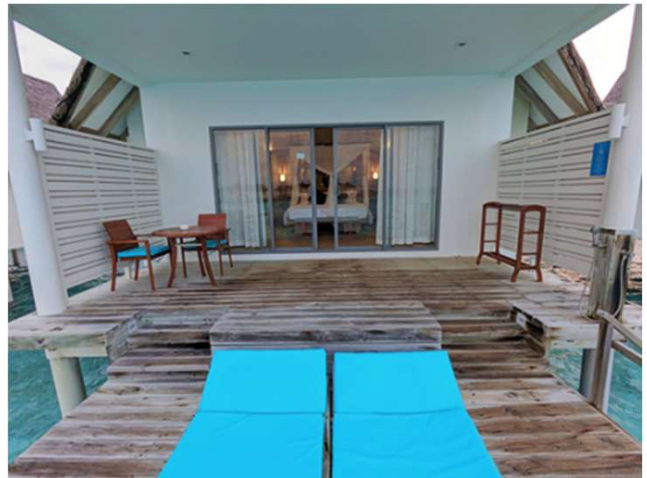
The quality of the furnishings is high and you will barely notice any signs of wear. The room has a large flat-screen TV, coffee/tea maker, fridge with the mini-bar inside, and a quiet and efficient air conditioner.

Behind the bedroom is a large bathroom, which is connected to the bedroom by two doors and a large central open which can be closed.

The bathroom has a shower, bathtub, toilet room with natural ventilation, separate sinks hair dryer, bathrobes, slippers, beach towels, safety vests, ceiling fans, safe, iron and ironing board, and large wardrobes. Toiletries are provided.

The deck has two depressions with lounge cushions in them, a staircase to access the water and a wood-framed hammock at the end that hangs over the ocean and that you can relax in.

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7.2.2 Coral Bar and Lounge

The Coral Bar and Lounge is located next to the [Reef restaurant](#) and the [swimming pool](#). In the same building, but next to the bar is the room where High Tea is served for all-inclusive customers and where the pool tables are (upstairs).

Here you can enjoy alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages and cocktails while listening to music. The bar has some views of the ocean and the pool.

Coral Bar and Lounge is open from 10am – midnight.



7.3.1 Reef Restaurant

The Reef Restaurant is a buffet restaurant that serves breakfast, lunch, and dinner. The cost of the food is included in your room rate, unless you choose half-board, which excludes lunch ([see Meal Plans here](#)). There is a different theme every day of the week for the food that is served, which repeats on a weekly basis. As most resort visitors come from China these days, you will always find some Chinese dishes on the menu.

You have beautiful views of the ocean and pool from the restaurant.

Opening times are:

- Breakfast: 7am – 10am
- Lunch: noon – 2:30pm
- Dinner: 7pm – 10pm with live music from 7:15pm – 9pm



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7.3.3 Suan Bua - Thai Restaurant

This Thai restaurant serves a variety of Thai dishes (including curry dishes and Pad Thai), and some Chinese dishes. It is only open for lunch and dinner. Depending on the dining experience that you have booked (all-inclusive or full/half board), your meal and drinks (incl. some alcoholic beverages) will be free or you will need to pay for the food ([see Meal Plans here](#)). Appetizers, entrées, and appetizers, each typically cost US\$20 and up. Your table in this restaurant needs to be booked in advance, ideally at least 24h prior, because available times can fill up quickly.

Opening times are:

- Lunch: noon – 2:30pm
- Dinner: 7pm – 10pm



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Excellent snorkeling at any tide level can be found at the east-facing reef just outside the [Club Sunset Overwater Pool Villas](#). It can, however, be a little tricky to get there during low tide. This area is also frequented by blacktip sharks and nurse sharks.

The best snorkeling is found at the reef starting at the Dive Center going south. The reef has a steep drop here and snorkeling and diving are fantastic. The variety and number of colorful fish are the highest of any on-beach location we have seen in the Maldives. Divers can also explore a shipwreck north of the Dive Center, which unfortunately is not visible to snorkelers as it lies too deep.

The Dive Center is open from 8:30am – 6pm.







7.5.1 Main Beach with Centara Swing in Water

This beach has soft white sand and is cleared of most coral pieces and stones for the first 10 feet (3 m) into the water. After that, and before you reach the swing, you will notice increasing amounts of coral pieces and stones until you reach the normal amount in the rest of the lagoon.

This north-facing beach is good for swimming and sunbathing. On its eastern side is a beach volleyball field.



7.5.2 Water Sports Beach with Swing on Beach

This long beach has soft white sand and is cleared of most coral pieces and stones for the first 10 feet (3 m) into the water. After that, and before you reach the swing, you will notice increasing amounts of coral pieces and stones.

The northern part of the beach near the boardwalk is reserved for water sport activities like paddle boarding, kayaking and pedal boating. The southern part of the beach near the Villas is good for sunbathing and swimming.



8. Exploring Malé

8.1 General information about Malé

Male is the capital, and most populous city of the Maldives. It is located in the North Malé Atoll or Kaafu Atoll.

The population of its administrative area consisting of a central island, an airport island, and four other islands is about 212,000. Malé Central Island has a size of about 2 square miles (6 km²) of which almost the entire area is used for buildings and roads. 133,000 people live on this small island, causing Male to be among the top 25 cities in the world with the highest population density.

Because most people live in tall residential buildings and ride motorcycles where they need to go, air pollution can be problematic in Male. Thousands of motorcycles, and lots of cars often cause serious congestion and motorcycles that are parked everywhere narrow roads down to one-way lanes and blocked-off sidewalks often force you to share the road with motorcycles and cars.





And yet, we recommend spending a few hours to explore Male as it has some interesting sites to see.

8.2 Where to stay in Malé

For many travelers, the airport on Male's Hulhulé island is the only thing they will see of the capital city. Some travelers will be forced to stay a night in Male, because their international flight does not line up with transportation to their hotel or resort somewhere else in the country. Only the bravest and most adventurous travelers will intentionally stay in Male with the goal to explore all three sides of the Maldives: the local islands, the resorts, and the capital city of Male.

Travelers who are only overnighting, because their international flight and domestic speedboat or flight don't align and do not intend to explore Male, are likely best advised to stay away from the chaos in Male and stay on the airport island Hulhulé ([map](#)). Adventurous travelers who want to immerse themselves into the busy life in Male will find it easy to find a hotel in the capital city. Since the island is small 1.2 miles x 0.9 miles (2 km x 1.4 km), the location is not all that important.

If you plan to take a taxi from the airport into town, you can stay anywhere.

Should you plan to take the inexpensive Airport Ferry (20 MVR per person per trip), our advice is, however, to stay near the Airport ferry pier ([map](#)) in the north eastern part of Male, as the heat, high humidity and air pollution make walking with luggage difficult.



1 = Male Velana International Airport (MLE)

2 = International Terminal

3 = Male-Airport Ferry Pier

4 = [Summer Beach Maldives Hotel](#)

The following map shows you what is available for your trip in Malé and Hulhulé:



8.2.1 Summer Beach Maldives Hotel in Malé

([map](#), [reviews](#), [website](#), [book](#))

For a more immersive experience, we decided to use the airport ferry from the airport to Male and decided to stay within 10min walking distance of the ferry pier ([map](#)).

We chose the Summer Beach Maldives Hotel, as it provides excellent value: it is a very good hotel in a wonderful location near the eastern artificial beach for a competitive price.

As in other hotels in the Maldives, we were welcomed in the airconditioned lobby with a welcome drink. The room, with a king bed, was beautifully furnished, and the bathroom was beautifully designed and has a shower with good water pressure.

The views from our room of the ocean, the eastern artificial beach, and the iconic Sinamale Bridge (China-Maldives Friendship Bridge) were fantastic, wifi was fast and reliable, and the hotel personnel was very friendly and helpful.

Our room rate included breakfast and a shared taxi ride to the airport.

The breakfast buffet was on the top floor of the building and came with beautiful views. It was plentiful and tasty.

Long story short: I highly recommend this hotel and would definitely stay here again.

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- 1 = [Artificial Beach \(Henveiru Beach\)](#)
- 2 = [King Salman Mosque](#)
- 3 = [Rehendhi Maizaan](#)
- 4 = [Sala Thai Restaurant](#)
- 5 = [Masjid Al-Sultan Mohamed Imaadhudheen](#)
- 6 = [Muliaage with Medhu Ziyaaraiy](#)
- 7 = [Hukuru Miskiiy \(Old Friday Mosque\)](#)
- 8 = [Rasrani Bageecha \(former Sultan Park\)](#)
- 9 = [Victory Monument](#)
- A = [Grand Friday Mosque, Islamic Centre](#)
- B = [Lemongrass Fifth Restaurant](#)
- C = [Republic Square \(Jumhooree Maidhaan\)](#)
- D = [Male Local Market](#)
- E = [Fish Market](#)
- F = [Supreme Court of the Maldives \(Theemugé\)](#)
- G = [Gadi Buru \(Clock Tower\)](#)
- H = [Rasfannu Artificial Beach](#)
- I = [Tsunami Monument](#)
- J = [Masjidhul Ai-Sulthan Muhammad Ibn Abdullah](#)
- K = [Majeedhee Magu Road](#)

8.3.1 Artificial Beach (Henveiru Beach)

([map](#), [reviews](#), [website](#))

Start your self-guided walking tour of Male at the eastern Artificial Beach, which is the most scenic of the beaches in Male. As the name implies, it is an artificial beach which was created to give locals and tourists a place to relax from the busy life in Male.

This is not a bikini beach! Please observe the [dress code recommendations for tourists](#). Even though you may see some tourists ignore the dress code and not getting in trouble as Maldivians are tolerant people, please respect the local culture and stay clothed from at least shortly above the knees to the neck, short sleeves permitted.

Most of the time, there will only be a few locals who take a bath, but on Fridays the beach and water is typically packed.



8.3.2 King Salman Mosque

([map](#), [reviews](#))

King Salman Mosque is named after King Salman from Saudi Arabia, which helped fund its construction from 2018-2022. With a capacity of 10,000 worshippers, it is the largest mosque in the Maldives.

The mosque is located near the ocean and flanked by five minarets which represent the five pillars of Islam. Its beautiful non-traditional blue dome is said to resemble a Bedouin desert tent.

We will just walk by this mosque and enter two other mosques later on the tour.

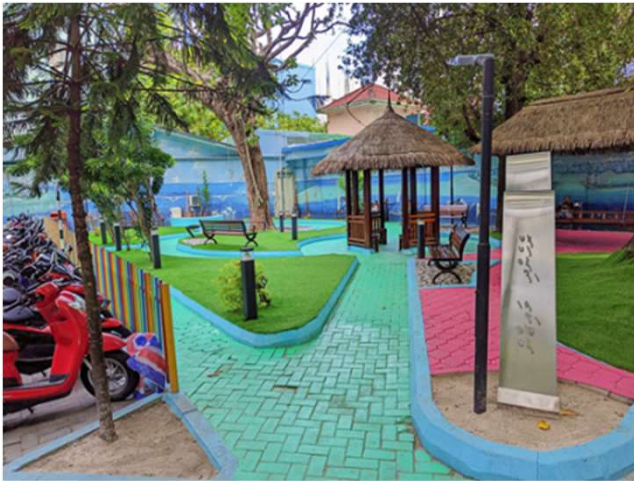


8.3.3 Rehendhi Maizaan

([map](#), [reviews](#))

This park is one of the few opportunities inside the city to sit down and relax. This colorful park has beautiful murals, some seats and it is shaded by trees.

There will, however, be traffic noise as the park is located on a busy street.



8.3.6 Muliaage with Medhu Ziyaaraiy

([map](#), [reviews](#))

Muliaage is the official residence of the President of the Maldives and therefore closed to the public.

Originally the site of Mulee'ge, the private residence of the mother of Sultan Dhon Bandaarain (1759–66), the site was redeveloped in 1914 by Sultan Muhammad Shamsuddeen III for his son and heir Prince Hassan Izzuddin as Muliaage (=new house of Muli). The site was always a residence as the Royal Palace was situated nearby in what is now [Rasrani Bageecha \(former Sultan Park\)](#).

In 1953, after the monarchy was briefly abandoned, Muliaage became the Presidential Palace. After the monarchy was reestablished, the site served as the Prime Minister's Office and, from 1960-1964, as the residence and office of the British Government Political Agent.

In 1968, Muliaage was once again declared as the Presidential Palace and most of the buildings were demolished.

Medhu Ziyaaraiy (=Central Tomb) houses the tomb of Moroccan scholar Abu al-Barakat Yusuf al-Barbari, who is believed to have introduced Islam to the Maldives in 1153. It was part of the original Muliaage building, but is now a separate building in the compound.



8.3.7 Hukuru Miskiiy (Old Friday Mosque)

([map](#), [reviews](#))

Hukuru Miskiiy was built from 1656-1658 over an earlier mosque from 1153, the year the Maldives converted to Islam, which in turn was built over an even older ancient temple that faced the setting sun, rather than west towards Mecca.

Hukuru Miskiiy is the oldest and most ornate mosque in Maldives and one of the finest coral stone buildings of the world and it is in continuous use since its construction.

The mosque has intricate carvings throughout with inscriptions in Quranic script.

The large, round blue-and-white minaret was built in 1675 and resembles a wedding cake with a wide base similar to a ship's funnel.

Surrounding the minaret is a graveyard containing carved coral tombstones. Tombstones of women have rounded tops while tombstones of men have pointed tops. Inscriptions for royalty are gilded and intricately decorated mausoleums are for their family members.



8.3.10 Masjid Al-Sultan Muhammad Thakurufaanu Al-Auzam Mosque (Grand Friday Mosque, Islamic Centre)

([map](#), [reviews](#))

With its iconic golden dome, the Islamic Centre is a landmark in Male.

Opened in 1984, it was built with the help of Brunei, Egypt, Kuwait, Malaysia, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

The mosque is named after Sultan Muhammad Thakurufaanu al-Auzam, who ruled over the Maldives from 1573 – 1585. He is most famous for defeating the Portuguese, and regaining independence for the country.

Besides the mosque, the building also houses the Ministry of Islamic Affairs, a library, and a conference hall.

The mosque has space for about 5,000 people on the carpeted area, but there is extra space that allows more than 10,000 to pray here.

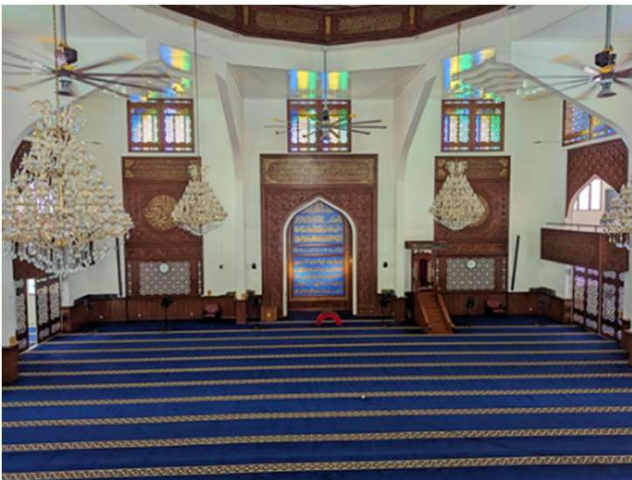
You can visit this mosque, but everyone's knees must be covered and women must cover their head.

There does not appear to be an official desk where you can get a tour. We just walked around and were then approached by a guard. When asked if we could visit the mosque, the guard was happy to give us a tour. Photography is allowed.

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Please be advised that you must take off your shoes when you walk up any of the stairs leading up into the building.

Please be advised that you will not be admitted during [prayer times](#), so make sure to arrive at least 30min before any of the prayer times.



8.3.14 Fish Market

([map](#), [reviews](#))

Located in a blue building across the street from the [Male Local Market](#), the fish market is a busy place where freshly caught fish constantly arrives and restaurant owners, and locals buy whatever suits their palate.



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8.3.20 Majeedhee Magu Road

([map](#), [reviews](#))

Majeedhee Magu Road is a main east-west thoroughfare road in central Male. It connects [Rasfannu Artificial Beach](#) in the west with [Henveiru Beach](#) in the east, and it is Male's major shopping street. This is the perfect place to buy some last-minute souvenirs or relax in some of the cafes and watch people go about their daily business.

As this is a major road, you will notice traffic noise and air pollution.





9. Closing Remarks

ABOUT RUDY FROM BACKPACK & SNORKEL

I was born in Germany and emigrated to the US in 2003. My wife and I are a truly multinational couple: I, with my German background, and she with her Chinese heritage. Both of us live in the USA.

Sadly, working in the US means we have much fewer vacation days compared to other countries like e.g. Germany and thus we cannot travel very frequently.

Through a lot of trial and error, we have found our ideal travel and vacation style. **Making Memorable Moments** by focusing on important destinations, planning time for meeting the locals and, of course, for relaxation are our priorities.

We have also learned to appreciate local foods and try to eat as many local dishes as possible. Just for fun, we try to eat at one Chinese restaurant in each country we visit. It is absolutely amazing how different Chinese food is all over the planet.



MAKING MEMORABLE MOMENTS

You may take 10,000 photos during your vacation, rush from one attraction to the next, but what you will remember in your heart is how you were **Making Memorable Moments**.

For me, that was e.g. Spider Rock in Canyon de Chelly (ever heard of this US National Park?). When I first saw it, I was blown away by this majestic natural obelisk and the beautiful canyon that it sits in. I have been there two more times and still feel the same.

Or think of Isla Mujeres, a small island outside Cancun, Mexico. On the surface, Playa Norte is supposedly Mexico's most beautiful beach and it is always crowded and the boats that anchor there play loud music. Below the surface, Isla Mujeres is very relaxed, quite walkable and it has friendly locals, good authentic Mexican food and good international cuisine and is often very affordable.

Isla Mujeres is our personal paradise!



PACK YOUR BACKPACK & SNORKEL AND LET'S GO

Our travel style has evolved over the years. We are packing light these days when we travel and typically only need a small backpack per person - see our [Traveling Light Guide](#).

With this guide, I want to provide value to you and help you plan your own relaxing vacations with the goal of **Making Memorable Moments!**

Please contact me if you have any questions or comments.