



The. Arrival

Travel Tabloid

MAY 2026



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Editor's Note

Dear Readers,

We are pleased to present the 28th edition of Arrival to our readers at a particularly critical moment for the Maldivian tourism industry. Our nation is currently facing the effects of global economic instability stemming from the ongoing conflict in the Middle East. As a result, travel access to the Maldives has become increasingly restricted, causing resort occupancy rates to fall to unprecedented lows.

Despite these challenges, we remain optimistic. If the government and stakeholders across the resort and guest-house sectors work together to implement timely and effective promotional initiatives, the industry will undoubtedly regain its former strength and vitality.

It is our sincere hope that brighter days lie ahead for the Maldives. We extend our heartfelt wishes for the continued well-being of the many Maldivian families whose livelihoods depend on tourism, and we look forward to a more stable, resilient, and prosperous future for the nation.

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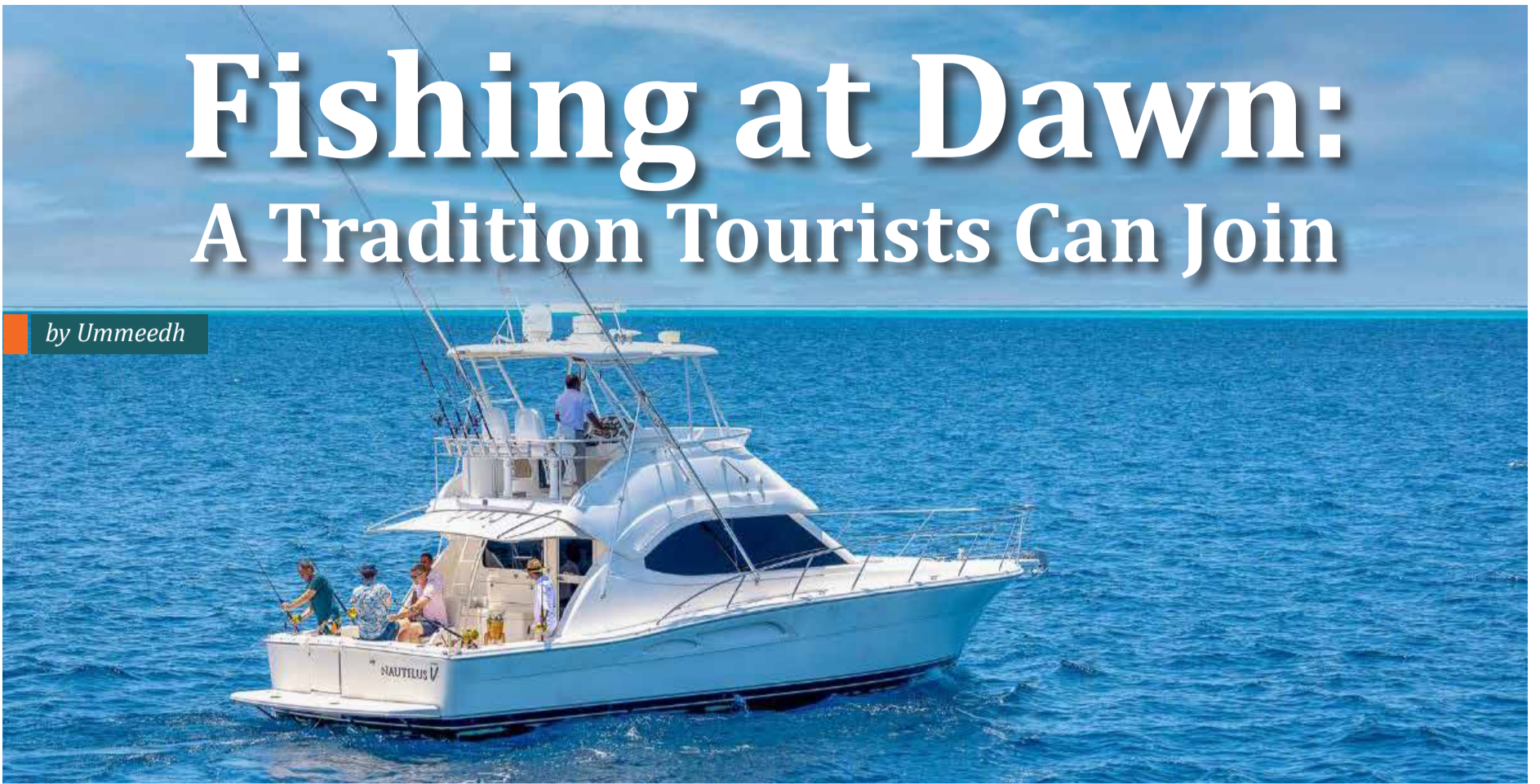
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Fishing at Dawn: A Tradition Tourists Can Join

by Ummeedh



Before the Maldives fully wakes up, before the heat settles over the lagoons and resorts begin their breakfast service, a quieter world is already in motion. Out on the open ocean, small wooden boats cut through the early light, guided by instinct, tradition, and generations of knowledge passed down at sea.

This is fishing at dawn, a practice deeply woven into Maldivian life. And increasingly, it is becoming one of the most authentic experiences visitors can take part in.

A Tradition That Begins Before Sunrise



Long before tourism defined the Maldives, fishing was the foundation of island life. The ocean is not just scenery here, it is livelihood, culture, and identity. Even today, as modern resorts and guesthouses shape the economy, fishing remains central to daily life for many communities.

At dawn, when the sea is at its calmest, fishermen set out in traditional boats known locally as dhonis. The timing is intentional. Early morning waters are quieter, cooler, and often more productive. The sky slowly transitions

from deep blue to soft gold as boats drift farther from shore.

For visitors joining these trips, the experience begins in silence. There is no rush, no noise, only the gentle sound of water against wood and the distant movement of the ocean.

Joining the Fishermen at Sea



Unlike staged tourist activities, dawn fishing trips in the Maldives are often real working excursions. Visitors are not separate from the process, they become part of it.

After boarding a fishing vessel, guests are usually briefed by local fishermen who explain techniques, timing, and basic handling methods. Depending on the method used, fishing may involve hand lines, traditional bait techniques, or simple trolling across reef edges.

There is something deeply grounding about this simplicity. No complex equipment. No digital screens. Just skill, patience, and attention to the movement of the sea.

As the boat moves further from shore, islands begin to fade into the horizon, leaving only water in every direction. The experience becomes less about catching fish and more about understanding a way of life.

The Calm Before the World Wakes Up

One of the most striking aspects of dawn fishing is the atmosphere.

The ocean is often incredibly still at this time. Light reflects softly across the surface, and the air carries a coolness that disappears as the day progresses. There are no crowds, no competing boats, no distractions, just open water and time moving slowly.

For many visitors, this becomes the most peaceful part of their entire trip. The usual expectations of tourism fade away, replaced by quiet observation and participation.

Even when fish are not immediately caught, the experience remains meaningful. It is the act of being present in that moment, on the water, at sunrise, sharing space with those who depend on the ocean every day.



A Culture Built on the Sea

Fishing in the Maldives is not only an economic activity; it is a cultural identity. Generations of island communities have built their lives around the ocean's rhythms. Knowledge of currents, fish behavior, weather patterns, and seasonal changes is often passed down informally through families.

Tuna fishing, in particular, has long been central to Maldivian tradition. The techniques used today still reflect older methods that rely on precision and patience rather than industrial scale



operations.

For tourists, participating in these traditions offers more than just an activity. It provides a glimpse into how closely life is tied to nature in the Maldives.

From Catch to Conversation

After hours at sea, boats eventually return to shore. The catch, if successful, is often shared, sorted, or prepared for local use. But for many visitors, the real

value of the experience is not measured in what is caught.

Instead, it is found in conversations with fishermen during the journey back. Stories about the sea, weather changes, island life, and past fishing trips often emerge naturally. These exchanges are simple but memorable, shaped by mutual curiosity rather than performance. There is no formal script. Just shared time on the water.

Why Tourists Keep Choosing It

In a destination known for luxury resorts and curated experiences, dawn fishing stands out precisely because it is not polished or staged.

It is real. It is quiet. It is unpredictable. For many travelers, especially those seeking more meaningful connections during their stay, this experience offers something different from typical excursions. It removes the barrier between visitor and local life, even if only for a few hours.

There is also a sense of balance to it. After days of relaxation, spa treatments, and beach time, dawn fishing introduces a different kind of engagement, active, yet calm; simple, yet immersive.

A Memory That Feels Different

What makes this experience lasting is

not its complexity, but its atmosphere. Long after returning home, travelers often remember the feeling more than the details: the stillness of the ocean at sunrise, the gentle movement of the boat, the quiet focus of fishermen working with practiced ease.

It is not a performance designed for tourism. It is a living tradition that happens to be shared.

And that is what makes it powerful.



More Than an Activity

Fishing at dawn in the Maldives is not just an excursion added to an itinerary. It is a window into a way of life shaped entirely by the sea.

For a few hours, visitors step into that rhythm, slow, patient, and deeply connected to nature.

And in a destination often defined by luxury, it is this simplicity that leaves the strongest impression.





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Maldives Tourism in 2026: Still Thriving, But Facing New Realities

by Ali Rilwan

The Maldives continues to shine as one of the world's most desirable travel destinations, but behind the picture-perfect beaches and overwater villas, the tourism industry is entering a new and more complex phase.

After a record-breaking performance in 2025, tourism in the Maldives remains strong in 2026. The country welcomed over 2.2 million tourists in 2025, marking the highest number in its history and nearly a 10% increase compared to the previous year. This growth also translated into significant economic gains, with tourism revenues reaching around USD 5.5 billion, highlighting the sector's continued dominance in the national economy.

Tourism is not just another industry in the Maldives, it is the backbone of the economy, contributing the largest share of foreign exchange and employment.

A Strong Start to 2026

The momentum has carried into 2026. Early figures show a steady increase in visitor arrivals, with January arrivals up by around 4–13% compared to the same period last year. February 2026 even recorded the highest monthly arrivals in history, reaching approximately 247,000 tourists.



In fact, the Maldives has already welcomed more than 650,000 visitors by April 2026, showing continued resilience despite global uncertainties. These numbers reflect a broader global trend: travel demand remains strong worldwide, with international tourism continuing to grow steadily after the pandemic recovery phase.

Changing Travel Patterns

While the numbers remain impressive, the structure of tourism in the Maldives is evolving. Resorts still dominate the market, hosting around 73% of tourists, but guesthouses now account for a growing 22% share.

This shift highlights a key trend: more travelers are seeking affordable and authentic experiences rather than purely luxury stays. Budget-conscious tourists, younger travelers, and repeat visitors are increasingly exploring local islands, cultural activities, and everyday Maldivian life.

At the same time, luxury tourism remains strong, with high-end resorts continuing to attract affluent travelers from Europe, China, and the Middle East. This dual market luxury and budget has become one of the Maldives' biggest strengths.

Opportunities and Expansion

The government has set ambitious targets, aiming to reach 2.5 million tourist arrivals in 2026. To achieve this, efforts are being made to expand into new markets, improve connectivity, and diversify tourism products.

New resorts, guesthouses, and tourism-related infrastructure continue to be developed across the islands. Additionally, marketing campaigns are targeting emerging markets while strengthening traditional ones such as India, China, Russia, and Europe.

There is also a growing focus on experiences, diving, wellness tourism, cultural tourism, and eco-tourism, which are becoming key selling points beyond the traditional "sun, sand, and sea" image.

Challenges Beneath the Surface

Despite the positive outlook, the industry is not without challenges. Global economic pressures, geopolitical

tensions, and rising travel costs can all impact visitor numbers. The Maldives, being a remote island nation, is particularly sensitive to fluctuations in flight connectivity and fuel prices.

Environmental concerns also remain a major issue. The Maldives is one of the world's lowest-lying countries, making it highly vulnerable to climate change, sea-level rise, and coral reef damage. These environmental risks directly threaten the natural beauty that draws tourists in the first place.

Additionally, as tourism grows, managing sustainability and preserving local culture have become increasingly important. Balancing development with environmental protection is now a key priority for the country.

A Resilient Future

Overall, the current situation of Maldives tourism can be described in one word: resilient.

The industry has not only recovered from the global pandemic but has surpassed previous records. Growth continues in 2026, supported by strong global travel demand and the Maldives' enduring appeal as a dream destination.

However, the future will depend on how well the country adapts to changing traveler preferences, global uncertainties, and environmental challenges.

The Maldives is no longer just about luxury escapes—it is becoming a more diverse, accessible, and experience-driven destination. If managed carefully, this transformation could ensure that the island nation remains at the top of the global tourism map for years to come.

The Journey Begins on Water: Inside the Maldives' Passenger Boat and Cruise Network

by Aziyadh

For most travelers, the Maldives begins in the sky, with a glimpse of scattered emerald islands floating in a vast blue ocean. But the real magic of arrival doesn't end at the runway. It continues on the water, where the country reveals its most defining feature: transportation by sea.

Unlike most destinations, the Maldives is a nation built on water. With over 1,000 islands spread across 26 atolls, boats are not just part of tourism, they are part of daily life. From airport transfers to inter-island journeys, passenger boats form the essential link between people, places, and experiences.

From Airport to Island: The First Journey

The arrival experience typically begins at Velana International Airport, the country's main international gateway. As soon as travelers exit the terminal, they are greeted not by taxis or trains, but by speedboats and ferry operators waiting at the jetty.

For nearby resorts and guesthouses, speedboats are the most common transfer method. These boats range from small 10–20 passenger vessels to larger, more comfortable high-speed crafts with shaded seating, air conditioning, and luggage space. Depending on the destination, the journey can take



anywhere from 10 minutes to over an hour.

This short ride often becomes the traveler's first real encounter with the Maldives' natural beauty, gliding over clear lagoons, passing tiny uninhabited islands, and watching seaplanes land on the water like floating birds.

Speedboat Transfers: Fast, Flexible, and Iconic

Speedboat transfers have become the backbone of Maldives tourism logistics. Almost every resort within the central atolls operates a dedicated fleet or partners with private operators.

These boats are designed for efficiency and comfort. Many are equipped with GPS navigation, safety equipment, and enclosed cabins to handle changing weather conditions. Crew members are often highly experienced, navigating channels and reefs that are invisible just below the surface.

For travelers, the experience feels like an introduction to a different rhythm of life, fast-moving yet surrounded by calm, endless ocean.

Domestic Ferry Network: The Everyday Lifeline

While resorts rely heavily on speedboats, local transportation depends on a different system entirely. The Maldives operates a public ferry network that connects inhabited islands across various atolls.

These ferries are slower, more traditional, and deeply woven into daily life. Operated by the government's transport services, they carry passengers, goods, and sometimes even livestock between islands.

Though not designed for luxury tourism, these ferries offer something equally valuable: a glimpse into real Maldivian life. Travelers who use them often experience long, scenic journeys where the ocean horizon stretches endlessly in every direction.

Liveaboards: Floating Hotels of the Ocean

For diving enthusiasts and adventure travelers, one of the most unique ways to explore the Maldives is through



liveaboard vessels. These are essentially floating hotels that travel between dive sites, allowing guests to wake up in a new location every day.

Liveboards combine accommodation, dining, and diving facilities in one vessel. Guests typically spend several days or even weeks onboard, exploring remote reefs that are not accessible from resorts.

The experience is immersive and highly social. Days are structured around dive schedules, meals, and relaxation on deck under the tropical sun. Nights are spent anchored in calm lagoons, far away from city lights or noise.

Luxury Yacht Charters: Private Exploration



At the higher end of the spectrum, private yacht charters have become increasingly popular. These vessels offer fully customized itineraries, allowing guests to explore islands, sandbanks, and reefs at their own pace.

Luxury yachts often include private chefs, diving instructors, and crew members dedicated to personalized service. For honeymooners or high-end travelers, this represents the ultimate expression of privacy and freedom in the Maldives.

Unlike fixed resort stays, yacht travel allows constant movement, sunrise on one atoll, sunset on another.

The Role of Seaplanes and Boat Connections

While seaplanes often grab attention for their scenic flights, they rely heavily on boat coordination for final transfers.



Even after landing on water, passengers are usually picked up by speedboats to reach their final destination.

This seamless integration between air and sea transport is what makes the Maldives tourism system unique. Every journey involves multiple layers of movement, all carefully synchronized across water channels and atolls.

Weather, Timing, and Ocean Conditions



Boat travel in the Maldives is highly dependent on weather conditions. The monsoon seasons can influence sea state, affecting travel times and comfort levels. During rougher periods, schedules may be adjusted for safety, with operators prioritizing early morning or calmer weather windows.

Despite these challenges, the system is remarkably efficient. Years of experience navigating the Indian Ocean have allowed local operators to build a reliable and safe transport network.

More Than Transport: A Signature Experience



In most countries, transportation is a background detail. In the Maldives, it is part of the experience itself.

Whether it's a speedboat slicing through turquoise water, a slow ferry connecting distant islands, or a luxury yacht drifting across sunset horizons, each journey adds to the story of the destination.

For many travelers, that first boat ride from the airport is unforgettable, not because it is merely a transfer, but because it feels like the moment the Maldives truly begins.

In a nation defined by the sea, the boats are not just transport. They are the lifeline, the connection, and often the first chapter of a traveler's island story.



Why Manta Rays Are the Maldives' Most Magical Experience

by Fathimath Shafath



The Maldives is globally celebrated for its white-sand beaches, turquoise lagoons, and luxurious island resorts. Yet, beyond the surface lies an experience that many travelers describe as the true highlight of their journey. For underwater enthusiasts, the Maldives offers one of the most extraordinary marine encounters in the world, the chance to witness the graceful movements of the Manta ray.

Often referred to as the “gentle giants of the ocean,” manta rays are among the most captivating marine species found in Maldivian waters. With wingspans that can exceed seven meters, their size alone is impressive. However, it is their elegance and calm demeanor that leave a lasting impression. Moving effortlessly through the water, mantas appear almost to fly, gliding in slow, rhythmic motions that evoke a sense of serenity and wonder.

A Global Hotspot for Manta Encounters

The Maldives is widely recognized as one of the best destinations in the world to observe manta rays in their natural habitat. This is largely due to the country’s unique geography and oceanographic conditions. The warm tropical waters, combined with seasonal plankton blooms, create an ideal feeding environment that attracts large numbers of manta rays throughout the year.

Certain locations within the archipelago are particularly renowned for consistent sightings. Among them is Hanifaru Bay, a protected marine area that has gained international recognition. During the southwest monsoon season, this bay transforms into a feeding ground where

dozens, and sometimes hundreds, of manta rays gather to feed on plankton. The phenomenon is considered one of the largest known aggregations of manta rays globally, offering visitors a rare and unforgettable spectacle.

Another notable site is Manta Point, where manta rays frequent cleaning stations. At these locations, smaller reef fish remove parasites from the mantas’ bodies. Divers and snorkelers can observe this natural interaction at close range, often witnessing multiple mantas circling gracefully as they take turns at the cleaning stations.

Accessible to All Travelers



One of the most appealing aspects of manta ray encounters in the Maldives is their accessibility. Unlike many marine experiences that require advanced diving skills, manta sightings can often be enjoyed by snorkelers. In many locations, mantas swim close to the surface, allowing even beginners to witness their movements without the need for specialized training.

Resorts and guesthouses across the Maldives offer guided excursions led by experienced professionals who understand the seasonal patterns and behaviors of manta rays. These guided trips not only increase the chances of sightings but also ensure that interactions are conducted responsibly and safely.

For underwater lovers, this accessibility transforms the experience from an exclusive activity into one that can be shared by families, first-time visitors, and seasoned divers alike.

An Emotional and Memorable Encounter

Encounters with manta rays are often described as deeply emotional experiences. Unlike faster-moving marine species, mantas exhibit a calm and curious nature. It is not uncommon for them to approach swimmers, maintaining a close yet respectful distance. Their large, forward-facing eyes and slow, deliberate movements create a unique sense of connection that many visitors find profoundly moving.

In these moments, the usual distractions of travel fade away. The sound of waves, the vastness of the ocean, and the presence of such a majestic creature combine to create a sense of stillness and perspective. For many, it is not simply a wildlife sighting, but a meaningful interaction with nature.

Seasonal Patterns and Planning

Manta ray sightings in the Maldives are influenced by seasonal monsoon patterns, which affect plankton distribution and ocean currents. From May to November, the western sides of atolls, particularly in Baa Atoll, offer the best opportunities for sightings. Conversely, from December to April, manta activity shifts toward the eastern sides, including areas around North and South Malé Atolls.

This predictable movement allows travelers to plan their visits

strategically, maximizing the likelihood of encountering these remarkable creatures.

Conservation and Responsibility

The Maldives has taken significant steps to protect its manta ray populations, recognizing their ecological and economic importance. Manta rays are legally protected, and strict guidelines are enforced during excursions to minimize human impact.

Organizations such as Manta Trust play a vital role in research and conservation efforts within the country. Through scientific studies, identification programs, and community engagement, they contribute to the long-term



protection of manta populations.

Visitors are encouraged to follow responsible practices, including maintaining a safe distance, avoiding physical contact, and respecting the guidance of trained professionals. These measures ensure that manta encounters remain sustainable and enjoyable for future generations.

A Defining Experience of the Maldives

While the Maldives offers a wide range of attractions, from luxury accommodations to vibrant coral reefs, manta rays stand out as a defining element of the destination's appeal. They represent the natural beauty and ecological richness that make the Maldives unique.

For underwater enthusiasts, the opportunity to witness manta rays in their natural environment is more than just an activity, it is an experience that captures the essence of the Maldives itself. It is a reminder that beyond the islands and resorts lies a living, breathing ocean filled with wonders waiting to be discovered.

In the end, it is often this silent, graceful encounter beneath the surface that leaves the most lasting impression, transforming a holiday into a truly unforgettable journey.

Morning Walks That Beat Any Resort Experience

by Ummeedh



Before the Maldives fully wakes up, before the resorts begin their breakfast service and speedboats start cutting across the lagoons, there is a different version of the islands that few tourists ever truly experience.

It begins quietly. No announcements. No schedules. Just the soft shift from night to morning, when the ocean is still calm and the air feels unusually fresh. For those who step outside early enough, the Maldives offers something that often surprises even seasoned travelers: a moment of complete stillness that feels more powerful than any luxury resort experience.

When the Islands Are Still Yours

Morning walks in the Maldives are unlike anything else in travel.

On many islands, especially outside the main tourist rush, the early hours belong to almost no one. The beaches are empty, the sand untouched, and the horizon wide open. There are no crowds, no music, no activity, just the natural rhythm of the sea meeting land.

This is when the islands feel most personal. The absence of noise creates a sense of space that is rare in modern travel. Every step along the shoreline becomes part of a private experience, as if the entire island is quietly unfolding just for the person walking.

It is in these moments that travelers begin to realize something unexpected: the Maldives is not only about luxury villas or overwater pools. It is also about silence, simplicity, and space.

The Fishermen Return

As the sky slowly shifts from deep blue to soft gold, another part of island life begins to appear.

Fishermen return from early morning trips, their boats cutting gently through calm waters. The sound of engines is soft, almost respectful, as they approach the shore. Nets are visible, filled with the night's catch, and there is a quiet rhythm to their movement that feels deeply connected to tradition.

Watching this unfold during a morning walk adds a layer of authenticity that no resort experience can replicate. It is not staged. It is not designed for tourism. It is simply daily life continuing as it has for generations.

For visitors, these small interactions—sometimes just a nod, sometimes a smile, become some of the most memorable parts of their stay.



A Different Kind of Luxury

The Maldives is often marketed through images of infinity pools, private butlers, and overwater villas. These experiences are undeniably beautiful. But morning walks introduce a different interpretation of luxury.

Here, luxury is not about service or exclusivity. It is about access, to silence, nature, and to time without interruption. There is something powerful about walking along a beach where no one else is present. The water is clear enough to see small fish near the shore. The sand is cool underfoot. The breeze carries no urgency.

In these moments, travelers are not being entertained. They simply exist within the environment.

Island Life Before the Day Begins

As the walk continues, signs of island life slowly increase.

Small cafés begin to open. Doors are unlocked. The smell of tea starts to drift into the air. Locals move slowly, preparing for the day ahead. Children may be seen heading toward school, their uniforms bright against the soft morning colors.

There is no rush in this movement. Everything feels coordinated by habit rather than time. The island is awake, but still calm.

For visitors, this contrast is striking. Many arrive expecting constant activity but discover instead that the most meaningful part of the day happens before anything is scheduled.

The Sound of the Ocean

One of the most unforgettable parts of a Maldivian morning walk is the soundscape.



There are no cars. No traffic. No background noise of urban life. Instead, the dominant sound is the ocean itself, waves gently reaching the shore, water moving through coral edges, and distant birds calling across the island.

This natural silence is not empty. It is full, layered, and constantly shifting. It allows travelers to notice details they

might otherwise miss: the texture of the sand, the changing light, the movement of clouds reflecting on the water.

It is this sensory simplicity that often stays in memory long after the trip ends.

Why Resorts Can't Replicate It



Luxury resorts in the Maldives are designed to provide comfort, privacy, and curated experiences. They succeed at this exceptionally well. But morning walks reveal something they cannot fully replicate: unpredictability.

A resort experience is structured. A morning walk is not.

You might encounter a fisherman pulling in nets. You might pass a quiet jetty with no one around. You might see a dog sleeping in the shade or a local pausing to watch the sea.

These small, unplanned moments create a sense of authenticity that feels more emotionally connected than any planned activity.

It is not about comparison. It is about contrast. Both experiences exist side by side, but they offer completely different forms of value.

The Emotional Impact of Simplicity

What makes morning walks so powerful is not their scale, but their simplicity. There is no need for preparation, booking, or cost. Just a decision to step outside early enough to catch the island before it fully wakes.

For many travelers, this becomes a turning point in how they view the Maldives. It shifts the focus from luxury consumption to lived experience. From structured activity to natural observation.

In a destination known for high-end travel, this simplicity becomes surprisingly rare—and therefore even more meaningful.

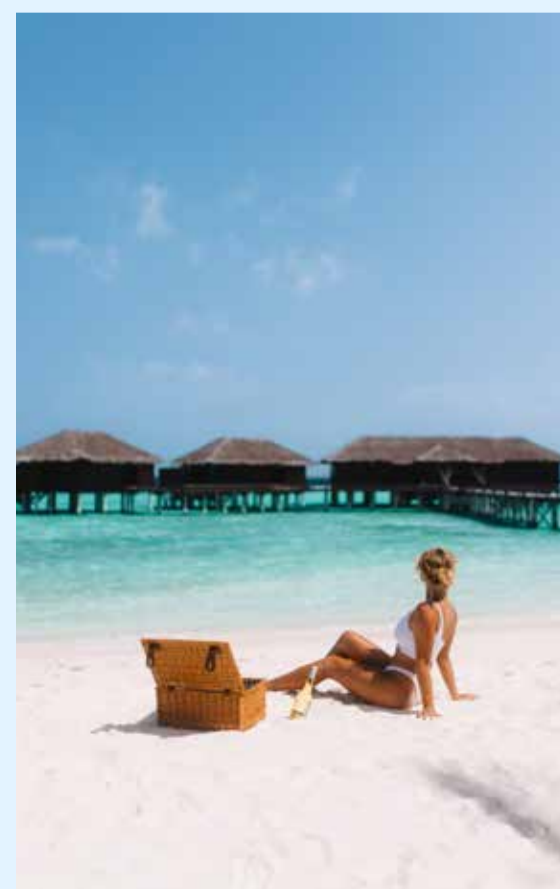
A Memory That Lasts Longer Than the Holiday

Long after the flight home, travelers may forget the details of their resort room or the names of excursions they joined. But the memory of a quiet morning walk tends to stay.

The empty beach. The returning fishermen. The soft light on the water. The feeling of being completely unhurried in a place where the world feels distant. These are not dramatic moments. They are quiet ones. But they often become the most personal.

In the end, it is not always the most luxurious experiences that define a destination. Sometimes, it is the simplest ones.

And in the Maldives, few experiences are simpler—or more unforgettable—than a morning walk before the world begins to move.



“Olhu Ala”: The Humble Taro Root of Maldives

by Shaahiya Moosa

Forget the overwater villas for a moment. Let's talk about what's on your plate.

The real taste of the Maldives isn't served in a mini-bar. It grows underground, and it goes by the name of “olhu ala”, taro.

If you're a traveller who craves authentic experiences, who wants to eat like a local and taste the true soul of a destination, then pay close attention. This humble root vegetable has been nourishing Maldivian families for centuries, and it's time you discovered why.

What Exactly is Olhu Ala?

A nuttier potato. A creamier yam. Olhu ala is taro, a starchy corm that has been a staple of Dhivehi home cooking for generations. When cooked, its flesh becomes tender, slightly buttery, with a subtle sweetness that pairs magically with coconut and tuna, two other pillars of Maldivian cuisine.

Unlike imported rice or processed snacks, olhu ala carries with it the taste of the soil, the memory of older generations, and the resilience of island agriculture. It's the kind of ingredient that doesn't try to impress you. It simply feeds you, comforts you, and leaves you smiling.



Nutritionally, taro is a powerhouse. Rich in fiber, resistant starch, potassium, and vitamins, it provides steady energy, a crucial benefit for fishing communities that spend long hours under the tropical sun. Your resort breakfast is delicious, but olhu ala will keep you going through a full day of island exploration.

Where It Grows

Olhu ala (taro) is carefully cultivated in home gardens across Maldives islands despite challenging sandy soil. However, Fuvahmulah, a unique single-island atoll with rich soil and freshwater lakes, produces taro of exceptional flavor and size. If visiting, tasting Fuvahmulah's famous taro is a must, though delicious regional varieties exist nationwide.

How to Eat Olhu Ala Like a Maldivian

So you've arrived in paradise. What should you order? Here's your traveller's tasting menu.

1. Breakfast: Mas Huni with Ala

Forget continental buffets. Wake up like a Maldivian. Mas huni, a mix of smoked tuna, grated coconut, onion, and chili, is the national breakfast. But when served with boiled and mashed olhu ala instead of breadfruit, it becomes a hearty, energy-packed meal that will fuel your morning snorkelling adventures.

2. Lunch: Ala Riha (Taro Curry)

This is the showstopper. Chunks of taro slow-simmered in thick coconut milk with turmeric, curry leaves, cinnamon bark, and a kick of chili. The sauce is rich enough to beg for steamed rice or roshi (local flatbread), and the taro soaks up every drop of flavour. Many versions add dried or fresh tuna, but the vegetarian version stands beautifully on its own. It's comfort food, Maldivian style, the kind of dish that makes you close your eyes and sigh with happiness.

3. Snack: Fried Ala Chips

After a morning of diving or simply lounging on the beach, you'll need a pick-me-up. Find a local hotaa (tea shop), those tiny, unassuming cafés where Maldivians gather for afternoon tea. Order a plate of crispy taro chips, tossed

in chili powder and salt. Pair it with sweet, milky black tea. Watch the island go by. This, right here, is the Maldives that postcards can't capture.

4. Simple Boiled and Mashed

For the purest experience, try olhu ala boiled until fork-tender, then mashed with a little butter or coconut cream. Add a pinch of salt and a few torn curry leaves. It's humble, warming, and speaks to a time when Maldivian kitchens had no imported luxuries — only what the land and sea provided.

A Taste of Tradition

Here's what makes olhu ala special beyond its flavour. For older Maldivians, taro represents resilience. During the rough southwest monsoon (hulhangu moosun), when seas were too dangerous for fishing, families relied on root vegetables like olhu ala from their gardens. It kept bellies full and spirits high during life's stormiest days.

When you eat olhu ala, you're not just having lunch. You're tasting history, community, and pride. You're connecting with generations of islanders who knew that the best food doesn't need to be fancy, it just needs to be honest.

The Final Bite

Travel is about more than ticking off landmarks. It's about tasting, smelling, and feeling a place. The Maldives offers endless beauty above the water, but some of its richest treasures lie beneath the soil. Olhu ala, humble, nourishing, and deeply traditional, is one of them.

So go ahead. Book that overwater bungalow. Sail into that sunset. But when hunger calls, answer it the Maldivian way. Find some olhu ala, take a bite, and taste an island's heart.

From Airport Hustler to Tourism Power Player: Shaaz Waleed's Extraordinary Journey

by Ali Rilwan

At 13 years old, Mohamed Shaaz Waleed was washing plates in cafés to help his family survive. Today, he leads a tourism company generating more than USD 100 million in annual revenue. In this interview the founder of Resort Life Maldives speaks openly about poverty, politics, charter flights during COVID-19, the rise of guesthouse tourism, and why he believes the Maldives tourism industry must adapt to changing global trends.

What first inspired you to enter the tourism industry, and did you ever imagine building a company of this scale?

I come from a very poor family. During my O'Level studies, I had to quit school and start working at the age of 13. I worked in cafés cleaning plates because my family needed financial support. Later, I worked in a government job, including the airport fire service and the National Security Service.

At the time, I felt there was very little opportunity for growth unless you had political or family connections. After leaving the security service, I started visiting the airport looking for work with travel agencies. I even tried to get jobs even as a peon, but I could not find any opportunity.



A friend suggested that I assist FITs, fully independent travellers, arriving at the airport. Later, we started a small company in 1998. I noticed tourists arriving with luggage tags from foreign tour operators, so I began emailing those companies directly. The business did

well in the beginning, but due to issues we had to close it.

After that, I returned to assisting independent travellers again, at the airport before eventually founding Resort Life Maldives nearly 20 years ago. I started everything on my own. I later moved to Ukraine, married my Ukrainian wife, and opened an office there.

How did you grow in the travel market and reach where you are today?

At that time, there were already major players dominating Maldivian tourism. I knew I needed to approach the business differently. The Maldives was already considered a luxury destination, especially for Russian and Eastern European travellers, but I understood that luxury tourism was not my starting point.

Instead, I focused on selling mid-range resorts. It was not easy. Some resorts did not even want to meet or work with us in the beginning. But as our company grew and our business numbers improved, resorts slowly started giving us opportunities.



Villa Resorts were among the first to support us by offering room allocations at properties such as Sun Island, Holiday Island and Paradise Island Resort. That support helped us grow significantly. Later, we also began working with Universal Resorts.

How would you describe the current status of Resort Life Maldives?

Today, Resort Life Maldives holds a significant stake in the tourism industry. We bring a large amount of business into the country and employ more than 100 staff members. Annually, we spend around USD 1.24 million on staff salaries, and all our employees are paid in US dollars.



We are strongly connected to the Maldivian economy. However, I still believe we have much more to achieve. My long-term dream is for our company to contribute around 20 to 30 percent of tourist arrivals to the Maldives. That would represent nearly USD 1.2 billion worth of business. With stronger government support, I believe this is possible.

Even during the current low season, our business performance is stronger compared to last year.

What was the most difficult period of your career during the COVID-19 shutdown?

COVID-19 was an extremely difficult period for the global travel industry. But I believed that once tourism reopened, every company would restart from the same level. The companies that moved fastest would survive and grow.

At that time, we had 28 staff members working in our Ukraine office. Together with three others, I launched charter flights to the Maldives. I personally took responsibility for repaying the costs even if seats remained unsold.

While much of the world remained closed, the Maldives reopened its borders to travellers. Within a week, we managed to completely sell out flights from Ukraine and Russia. Later, we expanded to two flights per week, and during the holiday season we were operating up to seven weekly flights.

Maldives tourism is highly competitive today. What still makes the Maldives special compared to other tropical destinations?

The Maldives still has something unique, but we also face serious challenges. Every Maldivian, including leaders, should ask why tourists should choose the Maldives over other destinations. Only then can we properly identify the issues affecting tourism.

One major concern is increasing taxes and fees. During difficult tourism periods, costs should not continue rising. Other countries are constantly finding ways to make travel easier and more affordable for visitors.

Traveller behaviour has also changed. Years ago, tourists came to the Maldives mainly for relaxation. They spent their holidays reading books on the beach. Today's travelers want experiences, excursions and cultural connections.

This is one reason guesthouse tourism has grown so rapidly. It is not only about lower prices. Resort guests sometimes feel restricted because every activity, restaurant or excursion comes within that boundary. One traveller even described a resort experience to me as a "modern Alcatraz."

Resorts should allow guests more flexibility to arrange their own excursions and transportation options.

Many people only see the luxury side of tourism. What are the biggest challenges behind the scenes?

Tourism is constantly evolving. Younger generations are

more interested in experiences and adventure rather than spending an entire week inside one luxury resort.

For example, some wealthy tourists arrive on private jet but travel to places like Fuvahmulah specifically to experience tiger shark diving. Guests today want a combination of luxury and authentic experiences.



Another issue is declining service standards. Earlier, many Maldivians worked directly in the tourism sector, and the service culture felt different. Today, there are foreign staffs who cannot even pronounce the resort names properly.

I also believe the current service charge system needs improvement. Since service charges are guaranteed, there is less motivation for some



employees to provide exceptional service.

What advice would you give to young Maldivians hoping to start their own tourism business?



Tourism is a very good industry with huge opportunities. But patience is extremely important. We started this company with only USD 150, and today our annual revenue exceeds USD 100 million.

You cannot expect success overnight. Growth happens step by step. Hard work, honesty and professionalism are very important in this business.

Which tourism trends will shape the Maldives over the next 10 years?

I believe the Maldives now needs to focus more on its history, heritage and culture. For many years we only promoted the luxury one island, one resort concept. But global travel trends are changing.

Travellers today want to learn about local culture and authentic lifestyles. The Maldives has a rich history and heritage, and we need to start sharing those stories with visitors as well.

What are some common misconceptions foreigners have about the Maldives before visiting?

Some tourists are confused about recent restrictions. Like banning of cigaretts. The new generation of tourists like the Gen-Zs they don't drink alcohol and stuff. But some of them use E ciggerets. Many younger travellers, especially Gen Z visitors, know that Maldives is a 100% Islamic country. But they also believe

that we are a modern Islamic country.

For example, tourists sometimes question why locals may dress freely while foreign visitors face criticism or police attention for wearing similar clothing on local islands. These are concerns that travellers increasingly ask about before visiting.

Is there any untapped tourism potential in the Maldives?

Yes, there are many untapped opportunities. I strongly believe Maldivian tourism can grow further if the national airline becomes stronger. Transportation remains one of the biggest challenges in tourism development.



I also believe the wedding tourism market has enormous potential, especially from India, where millions are spent annually on weddings.

What is one unforgettable experience you have had with a tourist during your career?

I once handled a situation involving a wealthy repeat visitor who arrived in the Maldives on a private jet. His Sons' passport had no empty pages left for immigration stamps because he travelled so frequently.

He told me a new passport had already been issued but was accidentally left behind. He calmly said, "Waleed, I know

you will take care of this."

I prepared the necessary documents and coordinated with immigration officials while the private jet returned to collect the passport. It was a memorable example of how flexibility and hospitality can create a positive experience for visitors.

If you could immediately change one thing about the Maldives tourism sector, what would it be?

I want tourism to become a more solid and properly structured industry. Right now, I feel the sector is sometimes treated like a stepchild despite being the backbone of the economy.

Tourism is highly interconnected. When travellers decide to visit the Maldives, more of the payments and benefits should flow directly into the country. Too much money currently stays outside the Maldives through foreign airlines, foreign agents and overseas companies. The moment a tourist decides to visit the Maldives, the economic benefits should begin flowing into the Maldivian economy.

After many years in tourism, what still motivates you today?

Of course, business is built on profit, but for me tourism is also a service to the country. More than anything, I see it as my contribution to the Maldivian economy.

From the first day I started this business, I believed I had an important role to play in this industry. Even today, no matter where I am, I come to the office every day and am usually among the first to arrive.

I believe that when people discuss Maldivian tourism today, Mohamed Shaaz Waleed should be part of that conversation.



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The Maldivian Breakfast Tourists Fall in Love With

by Masoodh

There is a quiet moment in the Maldives that many travelers remember long after the beaches, resorts, and boat rides fade from memory. It is not a sunset cruise or a luxury dinner on the water, it is breakfast.



Unlike elaborate international buffets or heavily styled fine dining experiences, the Maldivian breakfast is simple, unpretentious, and deeply connected to everyday island life. Yet it is this simplicity that often leaves the strongest impression on visitors. In a destination known for luxury and exclusivity, the morning table offers something completely different: authenticity.

A Morning That Moves at Island Pace

Breakfast in the Maldives does not feel rushed or structured. Whether it is served in a guesthouse on a local island, a small café tucked into a street corner, or a resort kitchen inspired by local traditions, it carries a calm rhythm that reflects the surrounding environment.

The day begins gently. Sunlight spreads across the lagoon, fishing boats begin their early journeys, and the ocean remains still before the heat of the day builds. Inside, there is the soft sound of preparation, kettles boiling, plates being arranged, and conversations starting slowly as the island wakes up.

Visitors quickly notice something different here: breakfast is not just a meal, but a moment of pause. There is no pressure to hurry, no expectation to move quickly to the next activity. Instead, there is time to sit, observe, and simply be present in

the environment.

Rooted in Island Tradition and Daily Life Maldivian breakfast traditions are shaped by geography, culture, and necessity. With limited agricultural land and a strong dependence on the ocean, local food culture has always been practical, resourceful, and closely tied to what is available.

Coconuts appear in many forms across morning meals, adding richness and texture to otherwise simple dishes. Fish, especially tuna, is a staple ingredient in various preparations, reflecting the country's long history of fishing and seafaring. Bread and flatbreads, influenced by centuries of trade across the Indian Ocean, are also commonly used as part of morning meals.

What stands out is not complexity, but balance. Flavors are subtle yet distinctive. Nothing feels overly heavy or overly processed. Instead, the food feels fresh, grounded, and connected to its surroundings.

This connection to everyday life is what makes the experience so meaningful for travelers. It is not a performance created for tourists, but a reflection of how people actually begin their day in the Maldives.

Why Travelers Remember It Most

In a destination filled with dramatic scenery, luxury villas, and world-class

hospitality, it is often the simplest experiences that stay with visitors the longest. Breakfast becomes one of those unexpected highlights.

One reason is authenticity. Many travelers arrive expecting luxury at every level, but they are often surprised by how naturally local life blends into their stay. Morning meals, especially outside large resort settings, offer a glimpse into real Maldivian routines and habits.



Another reason is atmosphere. Breakfast is often enjoyed in open-air spaces, near the ocean, or within small island communities where life moves at an unhurried pace. The sound of waves, the movement of boats in the distance, and the warmth of the morning sun all become part of the experience.

There is also something deeply personal about it. Unlike group excursions or scheduled activities, breakfast is quiet and individual. It is a time when travelers can reflect on their surroundings, plan their day, or simply sit in silence while the island slowly comes to life.

The Role of Guesthouses and Resorts

In recent years, the growth of guesthouses across local islands has played an important role in shaping how visitors experience Maldivian food culture.

These smaller accommodations often place greater emphasis on traditional meals and home-style hospitality,



allowing travelers to connect more closely with local life.

At the same time, many resorts have also begun to incorporate Maldivian-inspired elements into their breakfast offerings. While international cuisine remains widely available, there is growing interest in introducing guests to local flavors in a more meaningful way.

This combination of guesthouse authenticity and resort adaptation has created a more diverse culinary landscape. Visitors now have the opportunity to experience both comfort and culture within the same trip, depending on where they choose to stay.

A Reflection of the Maldives Itself

The Maldivian breakfast experience reflects the essence of the country as a whole. It is not defined by excess or complexity, but by simplicity, environment, and feeling.

Just as the islands are scattered across a vast ocean, the flavors of the morning

are light, balanced, and shaped by nature. There is a quiet harmony in how everything comes together, food, surroundings, and time. Nothing feels forced or artificial. Everything feels natural.



For many travelers, this becomes one of the most surprising discoveries of their journey. In a place often associated with luxury and visual spectacle, it is a quiet morning meal that reveals a different kind of richness.

A Memory That Lingers Beyond the Journey

Long after the holiday ends, travelers may forget specific excursions or room details, but they often remember the mornings. The soft light over the water.

The sound of life slowly beginning again. The simplicity of sitting still with a warm drink while the islands wake up around them.

These small, unassuming moments often become the most enduring memories of the Maldives. They represent a different kind of travel experience, one that is not measured by luxury or cost, but by atmosphere and emotion.



In the end, what makes the Maldivian breakfast so memorable is not what is on the table, but what surrounds it: the ocean, the silence, and the feeling of being fully present in one of the most beautiful places on earth.

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The Maldives Airport Expansion: A Growing Network Across the Atolls

by Dr. Ranjith Pavithra

The Maldives is undergoing a quiet but significant transformation in how people move across its islands. Traditionally known for its single international gateway and heavy reliance on boats and seaplanes, the country now has a growing network of regional and domestic airports spread across its atolls.

This shift is changing travel patterns, improving access to remote regions, and supporting the long-term development of tourism and local connectivity. But it also raises a practical question: how effective is this expanding airport system for a nation made up of scattered islands across the Indian Ocean?

From One Gateway to a Wider Network



For decades, all international arrivals flowed through one main point: Velana International Airport. It remains the country's primary international hub and continues to handle the vast majority of tourist arrivals today.

However, over time, the Maldives has developed a broader aviation network. The country now has around 18 operational airports, including domestic, regional, and international facilities distributed across different atolls.

These include airports such as Hanimaadhoo in the north, Maafaru in Noonu Atoll, Gan in the south, and Kooddoo in Gaafu Alifu Atoll. Each of these airports plays a specific role in connecting islands that would otherwise require long sea journeys or multiple transfers.

While Velana remains dominant, these regional airports extend access deeper into the country and reduce travel time to more remote regions.

Why the Expansion Is Happening

The Maldives is one of the most geographically dispersed countries in the world, stretching across hundreds of kilometers of ocean. This creates natural challenges in transportation, logistics, and national development.

The expansion of regional airports is driven by several practical objectives:

Improved connectivity between islands

Airports reduce travel time between distant atolls that would otherwise require long ferry or speedboat journeys.

Support for tourism growth

As tourism expands beyond central atolls, regional airports help open up new resort zones and guesthouse destinations.

Better access for local communities

Air travel provides faster options for medical transport, emergency services, and inter-island movement.

Economic development of outer regions



Airports help stimulate investment and infrastructure development in less-developed atolls.

This makes aviation not just a tourism tool, but also a national development strategy aimed at decentralization and improved accessibility.

Key Regional Airports and Their Roles

Each major regional airport has a slightly different function within the system.

Hanimaadhoo Airport serves the northern atolls and is currently undergoing significant upgrades to expand capacity and improve facilities. Maafaru International Airport was developed to support high-end tourism, private aviation, and regional connectivity in Noonu Atoll. Gan International Airport in the south plays an important role in linking southern



regions with other parts of the country and select international routes. Kooddoo Airport supports domestic travel within southern atolls and helps reduce reliance on long sea transfers.

Together, these airports form a distributed network that complements the central role of Velana International Airport.

The Reality: Boats and Seaplanes Still Dominate

Despite the growth of regional airports, the Maldives remains heavily dependent on sea and air transfers for tourism and daily transport.

Speedboats continue to be the most common method of reaching resorts near Malé and surrounding atolls. Seaplanes also play a major role, especially for long-distance transfers to remote islands and luxury resorts.

This means that while airports are expanding, they are not replacing traditional transport systems. Instead, they are working alongside them in a hybrid model that combines air and sea connectivity.

For most visitors, the journey still involves multiple stages: international flight, airport arrival, and then transfer by boat or seaplane to the final destination.

A Balanced but Complex Transport System

The current aviation strategy in the Maldives reflects a balancing act between efficiency, cost, and geography.

On one hand, regional airports reduce travel time and open up new areas for development. On the other, operating multiple airports across small island environments comes with

challenges, including high construction and maintenance costs, exposure to coastal weather conditions, fluctuating passenger demand tied to tourism cycles, and logistical complexity across dispersed locations.

Because of these factors, not all airports operate at the same level of capacity. Some serve steady domestic traffic, while others function more seasonally or with limited international operations. This creates a system that is functional but still evolving, shaped by both opportunity and limitation.

Tourism and Accessibility Impact



For tourism, the expanded airport system has introduced greater flexibility in routing and travel planning. Instead of every visitor passing through Malé and transferring by boat, some journeys can now be shortened through regional connections or domestic flight links.

This has helped improve access to northern atolls, southern island groups, and emerging tourism zones. It also supports the development of new resort areas and reduces pressure on the central transport hub.

However, the majority of international arrivals still depend on Velana International Airport, followed by boat or seaplane transfers to final destinations.

A System Still in Development

The Maldives airport network is still evolving. Expansion projects and

upgrades continue across multiple islands, aiming to improve runway capacity, passenger facilities, and



regional connectivity. But the system remains a supporting structure rather than a replacement for the central hub model. It works alongside sea transport and seaplane operations, rather than replacing them.

This makes the Maldives' transport system unique: a blend of aviation infrastructure and maritime mobility, shaped entirely by geography.

Conclusion: Strategic Growth Within Limits

The Maldives' approach to airport development is both ambitious and practical. With islands spread across vast distances, improving air connectivity is essential for national development,



tourism growth, and regional access. At the same time, the system is constrained by geography, cost, and environmental factors. As a result, it functions as a hybrid network rather than a fully centralized aviation model. In the end, the effectiveness of this expansion will depend not just on how many airports are built, but on how well they are integrated into the country's broader transport system.

For now, travel in the Maldives remains exactly what it has always been: a journey shaped by both sky and sea, where every arrival is part of a larger, interconnected island story.





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Sun Siyam Olhuveli:

Affordable Luxury Meets Endless Island Experiences

by Ali Rilwan

Just a 45-minute speedboat ride from Velana International Airport lies one of the Maldives' most vibrant and accessible island escapes. Sun Siyam Olhuveli. Spread across three interconnected tropical islands in South Malé Atoll, this resort has built a strong reputation for offering a rare balance: luxury experiences without the extreme price tag.

For many travelers, Olhuveli is where the Maldives becomes both exciting and approachable.

A Resort Spread Across Three Worlds



Unlike smaller, single-island resorts, Olhuveli offers variety. Guests can move freely between its islands, each with its own atmosphere. family-friendly zones, lively social areas, and even quieter, more romantic spaces.

The resort features hundreds of villas and rooms, ranging from beachfront villas surrounded by lush greenery to iconic overwater villas with direct lagoon access.

These accommodations are designed to suit everyone, from honeymooners looking for privacy to families needing space and convenience. Many villas include private terraces, ocean views, and direct access to the turquoise waters that define the Maldives.

Dining: A Culinary Journey Across the Islands

Food is one of Olhuveli's biggest strengths. With around 17 restaurants and bars, guests are spoiled for choice. Dining options range from international buffet spreads to specialty restaurants

offering Thai, Indian, seafood, and grill dishes. Signature spots like Sunset Restaurant provide ever-changing buffet experiences, while venues such as Maghrib Grill focus on freshly prepared seafood.

For more casual bites, guests can enjoy pizzas, burgers, and light snacks by the beach, making it easy to switch between fine dining and relaxed meals.

The resort also offers all-inclusive dine-around packages, allowing guests to explore multiple restaurants throughout their stay, an experience that adds variety and value.



Facilities That Go Beyond Expectations

Olhuveli stands out for its wide range of facilities, catering to both relaxation and activity.

The resort features multiple swimming pools, including infinity pools and family-friendly areas, along with direct access to pristine beaches.

For wellness, guests can unwind at two spa complexes, including overwater spa pavilions offering massages, hydrotherapy, and traditional treatments designed to rejuvenate both body and mind.

Fitness enthusiasts can enjoy a fully equipped gym, tennis courts, and various indoor games, while those seeking relaxation can simply lounge by the ocean or poolside.

Additional services include:

- In-house medical clinic and doctor
- Babysitting and kids' club facilities
- Laundry and room service
- Excursion and tour desks

- Free Wi-Fi and entertainment options

These features make the resort both comfortable and convenient, especially for longer stays.

Adventure and Ocean Experiences

Being in the Maldives, the ocean is the main attraction, and Olhuveli delivers fully.



The resort offers a comprehensive water sports centre, where guests can try kayaking, windsurfing, jet skiing, paddleboarding, and even parasailing. Diving enthusiasts have access to a professional dive school and over 50 dive sites, including coral reefs, caves, and even a shipwreck.

Snorkeling excursions are especially popular, with opportunities to see manta rays, dolphins, turtles, and reef sharks, a highlight for many visitors.

For those looking for calmer experiences, the resort also organizes:

- Dolphin cruises
- Sunset trips
- Island hopping tours
- Traditional night fishing

These excursions offer a deeper connection to Maldivian nature and culture.

Family-Friendly and Social Atmosphere

Unlike ultra-exclusive resorts that cater mainly to couples, Olhuveli embraces a broader audience.

Families are well accommodated with

kids' clubs, children's pools, and activity programs. In some cases, children can stay and eat free when sharing with parents, making it appealing for budget-conscious families.

At the same time, the resort maintains spaces for adults, such as infinity pools, spa zones, and quieter areas, ensuring a balanced experience.

Evenings at Olhuveli are lively, with live music, cultural shows, and themed entertainment, giving guests more to do after sunset compared to quieter resorts.

Why It Stands Out

What truly sets Sun Siyam Olhuveli apart is its value-for-experience ratio.

While many Maldivian resorts focus purely on high-end luxury, Olhuveli offers something different:

- Easy access (no expensive seaplane needed)
- Wide range of dining options
- Extensive activities and facilities
- Flexible accommodation choices

This makes it especially attractive to budget-conscious travelers who still want a full resort experience.

Final Impression

Sun Siyam Olhuveli is not just about relaxation, it's about variety, energy, and accessibility.

Whether you want to dive into the ocean, explore different cuisines, relax at a spa, or simply enjoy a sunset with a drink in hand, the resort offers it all in one place. In a destination often associated with exclusivity, Olhuveli proves that the Maldives can also be inclusive, vibrant, and surprisingly attainable without losing its magic.



AA. Ukulhas: The Eco-Paradise Redefining Local Tourism in the Maldives

by Adam Azim

Welcome to Ukulhas. Tucked away in the Alif Alif Atoll, about 70 kilometers west of Malé, this tiny island has quietly become the crown jewel of local tourism in the Maldives. And here's the best part: you can experience all the magic of the Maldives. The turquoise lagoons, the vibrant reefs, the soft sand, for a fraction of what you'd pay at a resort.

Why Ukulhas? The Island That Does Things Right

Ukulhas isn't just another pretty face in the Indian Ocean. This small fishing community, home to around 900 residents, has earned a reputation as the Maldives' environmental role model. In 2014, the island received the prestigious Green Leaf Award for its outstanding waste management systems and commitment to keeping its shores immaculate. Walk down the main street, Bodu Magu, and you won't find litter, you'll find a community that genuinely cares about its slice of paradise.



The island itself is tiny. Just 1,025 meters long and 225 meters wide. You can walk around the entire place in under half an hour. But don't let the size fool you. What Ukulhas lacks in landmass, it more than makes up for in soul-stirring beauty and adventure.

Things to Do: Your Ukulhas Bucket List

1. Snorkel the Legendary House Reef

This is the main event. Ukulhas has a spectacular house reef that you can reach directly from the beach, no boat required. Just put on your mask and fins, swim out a few dozen meters, and you'll find yourself floating above a vibrant underwater world.

What will you see? Everything. Colorful corals, massive schools of parrotfish, stingrays gliding across the sand, octopuses hiding in crevices, and if you're lucky sea turtles munching on seagrass.

The best entry point is opposite the bikini beach, where a natural channel in the coral gives you easy access to the reef wall. As one local guide put it, "the reef drops off into the blue abyss" and that's where the magic happens.

Pro tip: Go early morning, before the sun gets high and the current picks up. The light filtering through the water at 8 a.m. is pure magic.

2. Swim with Manta Rays and Sharks

Ukulhas sits in the North Ari Atoll, one of the best diving and snorkeling regions in the Maldives. Local guesthouses organize daily excursions to nearby hotspots where you can swim with majestic manta rays, sometimes up to 20 of them gathering in a single lagoon between Ukulhas and the neighboring island of Mathiveri.

And don't worry about the sharks. Blacktip reef sharks patrol the shallows, but they're completely harmless to humans. If you head to the pier around sunset, you can watch them circling in the harbor basin, hunting for dinner. It's

an unforgettable sight.

For certified divers, there's a PADI dive center on the island offering trips to world-class sites like Maaya Thila (famous for night dives) and Rasdhoo Madivaru (hammerhead territory).

3. Unwind on Bikini Beach

Yes, you read that right. Ukulhas has a designated "bikini beach" on its western side where tourists can swim and sunbathe freely. This stretch of sugar-white sand stretches nearly a kilometer, with plenty of sunbeds, umbrellas, and



shade from the palm trees.

The water is calm, warm, and brilliantly turquoise. Sunset views from this beach are the stuff of vacation posters. Many guesthouses are just a minute's walk away, so you can roll out of bed and onto the sand in no time.

4. Take a Sandbank Picnic

Here's something you can't do at a resort. Just a short boat ride from Ukulhas lie several uninhabited sandbanks, tiny slivers of white sand rising from the ocean. Your guesthouse can arrange a private trip to one of these spots, complete with a picnic lunch, snorkeling gear, and maybe even a barbecue.

Imagine this: you're standing on a sandbank in the middle of the Indian Ocean, nothing but blue water in every direction, with a cooler full of drinks and fresh grilled fish. That's not a vacation. That's a memory.

Some sandbanks have incredible house reefs too—one of them offers visibility up to 40 meters. Just don't swim alone, and always respect the currents.

5. Go Big Game Fishing

Ukulhas is famous throughout the Maldives for its yellowfin tuna fishing fleet. Local fishermen know the waters here intimately, and they offer big game fishing trips for visitors who want to test their skills against the ocean's heavy hitters.



6. Experience Traditional Bodu Beru

When the sun goes down, the island doesn't just go silent. Ukulhas has a vibrant traditional music scene, and you might catch a performance of Bodu Beru, the rhythmic, drum-heavy folk music of the Maldives. About fifteen men in sarongs and white shirts, four drummers, a vocalist, and a hypnotic beat that makes you want to move. The local group "Rahgudaa" is famous across the archipelago and sometimes performs for visitors.

Where to Stay and Eat



Ukulhas has embraced local tourism with warmth and professionalism. You'll find a range of guesthouses, from budget-friendly inns to more polished boutique hotels. Many are family-run, and the hospitality is genuine, hosts often prepare breakfast themselves and arrange excursions personally.

Ukulhas isn't trying to compete with the luxury resorts. It's doing something different, something arguably more meaningful. It's offering travellers an authentic slice of Maldivian life, wrapped in some of the most stunning natural beauty on the planet.



Whether you're a solo adventurer, a couple on a budget, or a family looking for a safe and beautiful escape, this little island delivers. Pack your snorkel, bring your sense of adventure, and come see why Ukulhas is the best kept secret in the Maldives.



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Al Shaali Marine Maldives Pvt Ltd

A member of Al Shaali Group, UAE and Coastline Investment Maldives

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The Falcon 510LX

We're proud to introduce the Falcon 510LX - a first-of-its-kind sport fishing yacht in the Maldives that sets a new standard for luxury, comfort, and performance on the water. Designed for both serious anglers and discerning explorers, the Falcon 510LX combines cutting-edge engineering with refined craftsmanship to deliver an unmatched experience in the Indian Ocean. Every element of this groundbreaking vessel - from its sleek exterior profile to its meticulously finished interiors - reflects a singular commitment to excellence. Whether cruising in style or chasing big game, the Falcon 510LX embodies power, precision, and sophistication.

Length Overall: 51 feet (15.54 metres)

Performance: Equipped with **quad Mercury 400hp V10 Verado** with **joystick control**, offering effortless handling, remarkable speed, and exceptional stability across open waters.



Interior: Modern, spacious, fully air-conditioned cabin with enclosed shower room and single head.

Features & Design Highlights:

- **Stable and Versatile:** Built for both family cruising and serious sport fishing adventures, the Falcon 510LX delivers exceptional stability, comfort, and maximum shade - perfect for long, sunny days at sea.
- **Advanced Navigation:** Outfitted with a **Garmin navigation suite**, including **twin 24-inch chart plotters**, ensuring precision navigation and effortless control.
- **Comprehensive Fishing Setup:** Experience every style of fishing - from **trolling, up to six lines with the 20-foot twin outriggers**, to **light and deep jigging, casting, live bait fishing, and deep drops for swordfish** - all supported by **state-of-the-art electric reels**.
- **Live Bait System:** Equipped with **twin live bait tanks** located on both port and starboard sides for maximum convenience and efficiency.
- **Immersive Entertainment:** Enjoy a **premium Fusion audio system** delivering crystal-clear sound for your favorite tunes on board.
- **Cutting-Edge Sonar:** Installed with **Live and 3D sonar** for detailed underwater imaging and precise fish targeting.
- **Powerful Radar:** The **Garmin GMR Fantom 256 open array radar** detects birds and objects within a 96NM range and as close as 6 metres, enhancing both navigation safety and fishing accuracy.
- **Enhanced Visibility:** Fitted with a **FLIR M300C ultra low-light camera** to track and identify objects even in challenging lighting conditions - ensuring safety and confidence during night operations.

The Falcon has landed!
Redefining Sport Fishing
Luxury in the Maldives!



Experience It Firsthand

With the arrival of the **Falcon 510LX**, the marine landscape enters a new era - setting an unprecedented standard for sport fishing excellence in the Maldives. Combining innovation, performance, and luxury, this vessel redefines what it means to fish and cruise in style.

Book a consultation session with our sales team today!

43-foot vessel is tailored for the tourism and hospitality industry, offering an ideal solution for luxury guest transfers, private charters, island excursions, and resort operations. Designed with both efficiency and passenger comfort in mind, the boat delivers a smooth, stable ride even in challenging ocean conditions

STRIKER 43

