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Travel Tabloid

MARCH 2026



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Editor's Note

Dear Readers,

The 27th edition of Arrival is released at a pivotal moment of global transformation. With deep concern, we observe the tourism industry navigating a period of significant change and mounting challenges. Yet, we remain hopeful that global leaders will come together in a collective effort to address these uncertainties and mitigate emerging risks.

As a nation that often feels the earliest and most profound impacts of global instability, the Maldives stands at a delicate crossroads. It is our shared aspiration to preserve the tranquility and natural beauty of our pristine waters and lush islands treasures that define our identity and sustain our economy.

Looking ahead, we remain committed to a greener, more sustainable future for the Maldives, while fostering continued resilience and prosperity within our tourism industry.

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SCAN TO READ ONLINE

Bandos Maldives:

The Island That Helped Put the Maldives on the Tourism Map

by Ali Rilwan



Nestled just a short speedboat ride from Velana International Airport, Bandos Maldives is more than a tropical escape, it's a living piece of Maldivian tourism history. For over half a century, this island resort has welcomed travelers from around the globe, earning its reputation as a pioneer of hospitality in a nation now synonymous with luxury escapes.

The story of Bandos begins nearly as soon as Maldives' modern tourism industry was born. In 1972, the government of then President Ibrahim Nasir made a bold decision to diversify the economy beyond fishing and agriculture, opening the first resort on Kurumba Island. Shortly afterward, Bandos opened its shores on 10 December 1972, becoming the second resort in the country at a time when

tourism was still an unknown frontier for the island nation.

With just 28 rooms at its inception, Bandos represented an ambitious vision, to share the Maldives' stunning natural beauty with the rest of the world. While other resorts would later compete for attention as tourism grew, Bandos carved out a special niche as one of the most accessible and welcoming gateways into Maldivian paradise.

A Journey of Growth and Transformation

Over the decades, Bandos has evolved significantly. In the early years of tourism, guests experienced a more rustic charm and a slower tempo of island life. The focus was on the basics: breathtaking beaches, clear waters, and

authentic Maldivian hospitality. Yet even then, it was clear that Bandos was laying the foundation for something enduring. A major turning point came in 2004, when the resort underwent substantial refurbishment to modernize its facilities while retaining the relaxed, tropical charm that had long defined it. This renovation introduced upgraded accommodations, expanded service offerings, and laid groundwork for future innovations.

Over the years that followed, Bandos continued to refine and expand its offerings, from a full service spa and diverse dining options to extensive recreational facilities and a renowned PADI dive center that gives guests direct access to one of the area's vibrant house reefs. Visitors can snorkel among colourful coral and tropical fish without

even leaving the lagoon surrounding the island, a rare treat that appeals to both first time travelers and seasoned divers alike.

The “Island of Hospitality”

Today, Bandos is affectionately known as the “Island of Hospitality,” a testament to its enduring ethos of warmth, care, and personalized service. For many guests, the resort doesn’t just represent a hotel, it’s a home away from home where families return year after year, making memories against the backdrop of palm fringed beaches and glittering seas.

This spirit of hospitality is rooted in the resort’s commitment to its people as much as its guests. Bandos employs a large local workforce, many of whom have grown with the island, becoming seasoned professionals in Maldives’ hospitality sector. This continuity of staff helps preserve the island’s culture of genuine welcome, a quality that distinguishes it from larger, more



Bandos’ sustainability strategy weaves environmental stewardship into everyday practices. Solar energy systems help cover a significant portion of the island’s daily energy needs, while efforts to eliminate single use plastics have drastically reduced waste. Coral restoration projects and partnerships with environmental agencies aim to

fresh designs and modern amenities with the timeless charm that has captivated generations of travelers.

This longevity is no accident. In a competitive landscape where luxury and exclusivity often dominate, Bandos has thrived by offering something different: approachable elegance, a welcoming atmosphere, and a deep connection to the natural wonders of the Maldives. Whether it’s a honeymoon couple watching a sunset over the lagoon, a family exploring house reefs, or long time repeat guests returning to familiar shores, Bandos continues to craft experiences that stay with visitors long after they’ve left its sandy beaches.

An Invitation to Discover

Over more than five decades, Bandos Maldives has witnessed the rise of Maldives tourism from humble beginnings to global renown. Yet through every chapter, it has remained true to its core, a place where the rhythms of island life meet heartfelt hospitality. For travelers seeking an authentic Maldivian experience that balances tradition with thoughtful innovation, Bandos stands as both a destination and a story worth



impersonal resorts.

Focus on Sustainability

While Bandos honors its history, it continues to embrace the future, especially in sustainability. The resort is Green Globe certified, a prestigious recognition of its environmentally responsible operations, including waste reduction, marine conservation initiatives, and investments in renewable energy.

protect the marine ecosystems that are essential to both the island’s natural beauty and the guest experience.

A Legacy in Motion

In December 2025, Bandos proudly celebrated its 53rd anniversary, a milestone few resorts worldwide can claim. At the event, the resort’s leadership reflected on decades of continuous service and reaffirmed its commitment to innovation — blending





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Into the Blue: The Story of Safari Tourism in the Maldives

by Ahmed Aziyadh

When most people picture the Maldives, they imagine white sand beaches, overwater villas, and dreamy sunsets, the ideal luxury resort experience. But beyond the exclusive escapes of private islands

and boutique guesthouses lies another enduring and dynamic facet of Maldivian tourism: safari tourism. For adventurous travelers, ocean based safari cruises are a gateway to the heart of the archipelago, a way to experience remote atolls, diverse marine life, and the nation's centuries old seafaring heritage.

Safari tourism didn't emerge overnight; it evolved from the very boats that shaped Maldivian life. For generations, the dhoni, a traditional wooden sailboat, was the backbone of local transport, fishing, and trade. In the early years of tourism, visitors who wished to explore more than one island often chartered dhonis, blending island hopping with fishing, diving, and cultural exchange. As the Maldives opened its doors to international travelers in the 1970s, these vessels gradually transformed. By the 1980s, safari dhonis equipped with cabins and modern amenities began cruising between atolls, laying the foundation for what safari tourism would become.

Unlike the static luxury of a resort stay, a safari cruise is about immersion and mobility. Guests wake to the sound of waves, explore hidden lagoons by day, and anchor near uninhabited islands by night. The appeal lies not just in the destinations but in the journey itself.



Travelers snorkel above vibrant coral gardens, observe manta rays and whale sharks in their natural environment, and watch the horizon change as the vessel sails from one atoll to the next.

Over the past few decades, safari tourism has developed into a niche but significant segment of the Maldives' tourism landscape. As of 2025, the Ministry of Tourism lists around 159 registered safari vessels, many of which are operational with diverse offerings, from budget friendly liveaboards to luxury ocean cruisers catering to divers and marine enthusiasts. While safari visitors remain a relatively small proportion of total arrivals, their presence is steadily growing.

According to the latest tourism data from the Maldives Ministry of Tourism and Environment, the country is experiencing robust overall tourism growth. In 2025, total arrivals are projected to surpass 2.2 million visitors, a near 9% increase from the previous year, reflecting sustained global interest. Resorts continue to dominate accommodation choices, hosting around 73.4% of all tourists, while safari vessels account for approximately 2-2.5% of stays — a figure that, though modest, represents thousands of travelers

seeking something beyond the resort circuit.

Moreover, the overall tourism bed capacity now includes more than 3,000 beds on safari vessels, illustrating the sector's tangible contribution to the national tourism infrastructure. This inclusion underscores the recognition that safari tourism is not just a fringe option but a valued component of Maldives' diversified tourism offering.



One of the strongest draws of safari tourism lies in its ecotourism potential.

As the global travel market increasingly prioritizes sustainability and experiential travel, safari cruises offer an intimate way to observe fragile marine ecosystems while promoting responsible tourism practices. Many operators emphasize environmental stewardship, such as waste management protocols, coral reef protection efforts, and careful wildlife watching practices that minimize human impact. These measures align with broader global trends: worldwide demand for adventure and nature based travel continues to grow, even as tourists become more conscious of their ecological footprint.

Cultural immersion is another essential thread in the safari experience. Unlike isolated resort stays, safari itineraries often include visits to inhabited islands where guests learn about local life, sample Maldivian cuisine, and engage with traditional arts and crafts. This human dimension deepens the traveler's connection to the place, highlighting the rich tapestry of island communities scattered across the archipelago.

Safari tourism's appeal also stems from its adaptability. Operators craft varied itineraries: some are dedicated to scuba divers eager to explore the Maldives' world class reefs, while others focus on photography, fishing, or simply cruising at a leisurely pace through tranquil waters. Multi day safaris often cover several atolls, unlocking access to secluded coves and pristine environments unreachable by day trips.



While resorts will likely remain the Maldives' dominant tourism product, safari tourism stands out as a compelling alternative, a way of experiencing the archipelago as the early mariners once did. It embodies a spirit of adventure, exploration, and respect for the natural world. For travelers who are drawn to life on the water, who yearn to chart their own course through coral studded seas, the Maldives' safari voyages offer a journey that's as enriching as it is unforgettable.

In a nation where tourism forms the economic backbone, safari tourism enriches the story by adding depth, diversity, and authenticity. It reminds visitors that the Maldives is not just its resorts, it is an oceanic tapestry woven from tradition, adventure, and the enduring allure of the blue horizon.

Dancing with the Sea: Dolphins of the Maldives

by Ahmed Zahir



In the Maldives, paradise is more than powdery white sands, turquoise lagoons, or overwater villas. It is also the playful twist of a spinner dolphin, the curious glance of a bottlenose, and the rhythmic spray of fins cutting through the morning waves. For travelers seeking more than a postcard view, these oceanic performers have become one of the most unforgettable aspects of visiting the islands.

Long before the sun fully rises over the atolls, dhonis and small motorboats slip quietly from harbors. Travelers lean over the rails, scanning the horizon, hoping for the telltale spout of water. Then, almost like a magic trick, they appear: sleek, glistening bodies arcing above the sea, spinning, flipping, and weaving in perfect synchrony. The moment is pure wonder, a living performance orchestrated by nature, and for many visitors, it becomes the highlight of their trip.



Dolphin encounters have grown into one of the Maldives' most popular tourist experiences. While luxury resorts often dominate the international image of the country, marine-based excursions like these draw a diverse mix of travelers, honeymooners, families, adventure seekers, and nature lovers. Local operators emphasize responsible tourism, ensuring that boats maintain respectful distances and that the dolphins' natural behavior is never disrupted. It is not about forcing interaction but observing a wild spectacle that has been ongoing long before humans arrived.

The economic impact of these encounters is significant. Dolphin tours provide income for local guesthouses, boat captains, guides, and support staff in communities that are often far from the main resort hubs. For islands building their tourism profile, these excursions help diversify revenue streams while giving visitors an authentic experience of Maldivian life. Guests learn not only about the dolphins but also about the people who live and work alongside them, creating a deeper connection to the destination.

Dolphins also play a vital role in the health of the marine ecosystem. As intelligent predators, they help maintain



balance within reef habitats, indirectly supporting vibrant coral systems and fish populations. Their presence signals a thriving environment, one that sustains the diversity of sea turtles, reef fish, and other marine life. Many tours now include educational components where guides explain dolphin social structures, communication, and migratory patterns. Some even invite visitors to participate in citizen science, recording sightings and behaviors that contribute to conservation research.

Cultural connections enrich these experiences. For Maldivians, the ocean is life itself, a source of food, livelihood, and stories. Dolphins are not curiosities but familiar companions, appearing regularly alongside fishing boats or gliding near village harbors. Visitors often find that observing dolphins alongside locals transforms the encounter. It is not only about seeing wildlife but understanding the rhythm of island life and the reverence for the creatures that inhabit the surrounding waters.

Sustainability and responsible tourism are central to the long-term preservation of these encounters. Operators follow strict guidelines to limit noise, avoid chasing pods, and reduce environmental impact. Educational initiatives in schools and communities emphasize conservation, fostering a sense of



stewardship among both locals and visitors. Protecting dolphins and their habitat ensures that these experiences remain available for future generations while maintaining the Maldives' global reputation for ecotourism.

The magic of dolphin encounters lies in their combination of awe, intimacy, and learning. Seeing dolphins leap at sunrise, spinning in synchronized arcs, creates moments of pure joy. Visitors often describe a feeling of connection, as if sharing a secret with the ocean itself. It is this sense of discovery, fleeting, vibrant, and real that leaves lasting memories long after travelers leave the islands.

In a destination defined by natural beauty, the dolphins of the Maldives stand out as icons of wonder and connection. They remind visitors that the magic of these islands extends far beyond luxury villas and powdery beaches. It lives in the living, breathing ocean, in the wild energy of creatures that have navigated these waters for centuries. Every leap, flip, and playful pod reminds us why we travel, to witness

beauty, to feel alive, and to connect with the natural world.

From quiet mornings on a dhoni to sunset trips across shimmering lagoons, dolphins offer both spectacle and substance. They transform ordinary

excursions into profound experiences, blending adventure, education, and cultural immersion. For travelers seeking more than a holiday, encounters with dolphins provide a chance to witness the soul of the Maldives — a world where nature, people, and the sea coexist in harmony, and where every visit becomes a story worth telling.



Maldives in 2026: A Year of Growth, Resilience, and Global Tourism Momentum

by Ali Rilwan

For the Maldives ; a nation of coral atolls and sapphire seas , tourism isn't just an industry. It's the heartbeat of the economy, a cultural bridge to the world, and a constant work in progress. As 2026 unfolds, the story of Maldivian tourism reads like a breathtaking travel narrative: record arrivals, new international connections, shifting visitor markets, and an industry adapting rapidly to global dynamics while safeguarding its natural treasures.

history, expectations were high for what 2026 might bring.

Entering this year, the Maldives has not lost momentum. By late February 2026, the country welcomed around 441,000 tourists, a notable rise over the same period last year.

The tourism pulse remains strong, with an average of about 8,000 arrivals per day, up from 7,300 daily arrivals in early



shifting global patterns of tourism demand. In 2026 so far, China has overtaken Russia and Italy as the largest source market, with more than 72,000 Chinese visitors recorded by late February, a 27 % surge compared with the same period last year.

This shift underscores broader changes in global travel trends and the increasing attraction of the Maldives in East Asia. While Russia and Italy remain top contributors, the rise of China as a leading tourism feeder market is reshaping Maldives' tourism strategy and marketing efforts.

Diversifying Connectivity: New Flight Routes

Accessibility has long been a key to Maldives' tourism success, and 2026 is another pivotal year for aviation links. In collaboration with Australia's Luxury Escapes, national carrier Maldivian is launching Australia's first ever direct flights between Melbourne and Malé beginning May 2026. These seasonal nonstop services are expected to attract more Australian travelers, cutting travel time dramatically and opening a new long haul gateway to the islands.

This historic air link not only



Record Breaking Arrivals Continue into 2026

After setting a historic tourism milestone in 2025, when a record 2.24 million visitors stepped onto Maldivian shores, a 9.8 % increase over the previous year and the highest tally in the nation's

2025, a sign that international demand for Maldivian vacations continues to grow.

Shifting Source Markets: China Takes the Lead

One of the year's biggest stories is the

strengthens ties with a growing tourism market but also diversifies Maldives' connectivity beyond traditional hubs, a strategic move for long term growth.

Responding to Global Airspace Disruptions

Despite strong tourism demand, 2026 has also tested the resilience of Maldives' travel network. Airspace closures in parts of the Middle East have disrupted transit routes that many airlines use to connect travelers to the islands. In



response, the Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation initiated high level talks to expand alternative flight links and reduce reliance on affected corridors , focusing on direct connections from Southeast Asia, East Asia, and India to cushion the impact on travel flows. Officials underscored that the Maldives remains committed to ensuring travel continuity for visitors, while actively adapting to evolving global aviation conditions.

Growing Accommodation Choices & Visitor Preferences

Tourism data from early 2026 shows that the majority of visitors still prefer the Maldives' signature resort experience. More than 300,000 tourists opted for resort stays, while over 100,000 chose guesthouses, and more than 12,000 stayed on safari vessels , highlighting the destination's broad range of holiday styles.

This diversity reflects how tourism in the Maldives is no longer one dimensional. Travelers now seek everything from luxury seclusion to authentic cultural interactions and adventure based safaris, expanding the country's appeal well beyond its classic villa by the sea image.

Global Recognition & Events Boost the Spotlight

International accolades and high profile events have further elevated Maldives' tourism profile. Awards such as being named Best Beach Destination at the World Tourism Awards 2025 and inclusion among world's top food destinations by global travel publications have enhanced its global brand.

Looking ahead, Maldives is also set to host the World Travel Awards Indian Ocean Gala 2026 on World Tourism Day (September 27) — a prestigious event that brings the global travel industry together and shines an even stronger spotlight on the destination.

Strategic Industry Leadership & Growth

The start of 2026 also saw strengthened



industry leadership with key tourism bodies and stakeholders aligning strategies to sustain growth. The Maldives Association of Tourism Industry (MATI) and the Tourism Ministry have focused discussions on governance, infrastructure planning, and market diversification — all essential for maintaining competitiveness in a crowded global market.



Looking Ahead: 2026 and Beyond

As the first quarter of 2026 draws to a close, the Maldives' tourism run shows no signs of slowing. From record arrivals and shifting market landscapes to new direct flight routes and adaptive strategies in the face of global disruptions, the Maldives has demonstrated impressive resilience and innovation.

For a nation whose economy depends so heavily on international visitors, this moment is more than just a seasonal

surge , it's a testament to strategic evolution, global appeal, and the enduring power of its natural beauty to draw the world's travellers.

In 2026, the Maldives continues to affirm its place not only as a vacation paradise but as a global tourism leader that is adapting, expanding, and inviting the world to experience its wonders in new ways.

When the Skies Fall Silent: How Middle East Tensions Ripple Through Maldivian Tourism

by Ahmed Aziyadh

When Middle East tensions ripple through Maldivian tourism, the rhythm at Velana International Airport falters. As conflict disrupts airspace and forces flight cancellations, the effects are felt thousands of miles away. For this tourism-dependent nation, the sky is a lifeline; the Maldives relies heavily on long-haul connectivity routed through Gulf hubs. Carriers based there are critical bridges linking Europe and Asia to Malé. When instability leads to suspended routes or re-routings, the shock travels quickly across the Indian Ocean. What begins as a geopolitical



single market defines the industry, Gulf aviation networks play an outsized role; disruptions there create bottlenecks everywhere.



Resort managers describe the situation as a pause filled with questions. Forward bookings remain strong, yet short-term volatility has increased. Honeymooners and luxury travelers now ask about flexible cancellation policies, while families inquire about alternative routing through Asian hubs. Economic implications extend beyond arrivals; staff rosters and procurement schedules

change when occupancy projections shift. Even local fishermen and farmers feel the subtle tremors of reduced demand. There is also a psychological component, as headlines about regional instability can influence traveler sentiment even when the Maldives remains far removed from conflict zones.

flashpoint can end as an empty villa night on a resort island. Following recent escalations, travel agents reported a surge of uncertainty. Some guests postponed departures, while others found themselves stranded mid-journey. The domino effect was immediate: delayed inbound aircraft meant delayed speedboat transfers, and missed connections meant rooms held longer than planned. Logistics teams shifted into contingency mode. At the airport, fewer arrivals meant quieter transfer counters, and resort lounges that usually buzz felt subdued. While no

Yet resilience is a familiar story. The industry has weathered global shocks before by being adaptable. In response to recent turbulence, some travelers are exploring pathways via South and Southeast Asia, using carriers through

cities like Colombo and Singapore to bypass affected airspace. While these adjustments add hours to travel, they offer reassurance. For hoteliers, communication is the most valuable tool. Many properties have extended grace periods for rebooking, emphasizing long-term relationships over short-term occupancy.

The broader question concerns duration, as prolonged instability presents deeper challenges for a destination dependent on seamless global connectivity. Still, there are signs of steadiness. Demand remains strong across core markets, and travelers continue to see the destination as aspirational and safe. Industry insiders note that logistical hurdles do not necessarily diminish long-term desire. On resort islands, sunsets continue uninterrupted, and the contrast between global tension and island tranquility feels sharper. As arrival boards gradually repopulate, the Maldives continues to navigate these metaphorical tides. The challenge lies in diversifying access points and strengthening resilience against external shocks. When skies grow uncertain, the islands wait, maintaining the promise that paradise awaits at the end of the journey.



Bambukeyo Baiy: The Taste of Maldivian Heritage

by Ali Rilwan



In the sun-drenched islands of the Maldives, one humble dish carries the weight of centuries: Bambukeyo Baiy. At first glance, it may appear simple—rice cooked with breadfruit and coconut milk—yet beneath its unassuming exterior lies a story of resilience, tradition, and island ingenuity. It is a dish that has nourished generations, connecting communities and serving as a living testament to Maldivian culinary heritage.



The Maldives has always depended on what the land and sea can offer. While tuna and rice formed the backbone of meals, another staple quietly sustained communities: bambukeyo, or breadfruit. Abundant, hardy, and versatile, breadfruit was particularly important when

fishing yields were low or imported rice was scarce. This reliable tropical fruit gives the dish its name: a combination of baiy (cooked rice) and bambukeyo (the breadfruit at its heart).

Historically, Bambukeyo Baiy reflected community and adaptability. Families would gather under towering trees, peeling and dicing the fruit while rice simmered in coconut milk over open fires. The fragrant combination would signal that a communal meal was near. In a nation where rice often had to be imported, combining it with locally grown breadfruit was essential—a strategy that stretched valuable staples while creating a flavorful meal.

The dish's versatility made it suitable for everyday meals or festive occasions. A simple version might accompany garudhiya (fish broth) or rihaakuru dhiya (tuna paste mixed with coconut milk). On special occasions, it could be served with smoked or grilled tuna, fresh chilies, and lime, transforming the humble dish into a centerpiece. Through

these traditions, Bambukeyo Baiy became a vessel for culture, memory, and connection.

Breadfruit itself holds a special place in Maldivian culture. Its leaves, wood, and fibers were used for natural remedies, utilities, or even boat building. Today, modern chefs and home cooks are rediscovering Bambukeyo Baiy, celebrating it as more than a relic. Some present it with a contemporary twist, but the essence remains: rice cooked until tender, cubes of breadfruit softened to perfection, and coconut milk weaving it all together.

For locals, the dish evokes childhood memories and the rhythms of island life. For visitors, it offers a taste of authentic culture beyond resort menus. Bambukeyo Baiy is also a story of sustainability. In a land where resources are limited, using local breadfruit was both practical and ecologically sensible. The dish reflects a historical approach to living in harmony with the environment.

Ultimately, Bambukeyo Baiy tells a story on a plate. It speaks of a time when food was dictated by nature's cycles and when ingenuity turned simplicity into sustenance. It embodies the soul of Maldivian cooking: resourceful, flavorful, and profoundly connected to heritage. Each bite is a journey through history and a reminder that the most treasured experiences are rooted in simplicity. It remains a delicious way to experience the heart of island tradition.



Captain Adam Afrah's Journey from Ground Crew to Captain

Dreams, Discipline and Flying the Skies

by Ali Rilwan

Captain Adam Afrah on Dreams, Discipline and Flying the Skies

For many Maldivians, watching aircraft take off over the lagoon is a familiar sight. For Captain Adam Afrah, those moments as a child watching planes from the shoreline would eventually shape his life's path. Today he commands the Airbus A320 for the national airline Maldivian, carrying passengers across the region and beyond. His journey into aviation was not immediate or easy. Beginning his career with Trans Maldivian Airways as ground staff in 2008, Adam steadily worked his way up through determination, training and perseverance to reach the captain's seat.

How would you describe your school days?

My school days were enjoyable, but I always tried to stay focused on my studies. I was especially interested in mathematics and physics because I knew those subjects were important if I wanted to become a pilot. Flying had been my dream since childhood.

Outside the classroom I enjoyed sports as well, especially cricket. After completing my O-Levels I learned that it was possible to enter aviation training without completing A-Levels, so I decided to start working in the aviation sector while continuing my path toward becoming a pilot.



Who supported you the most during your school years?

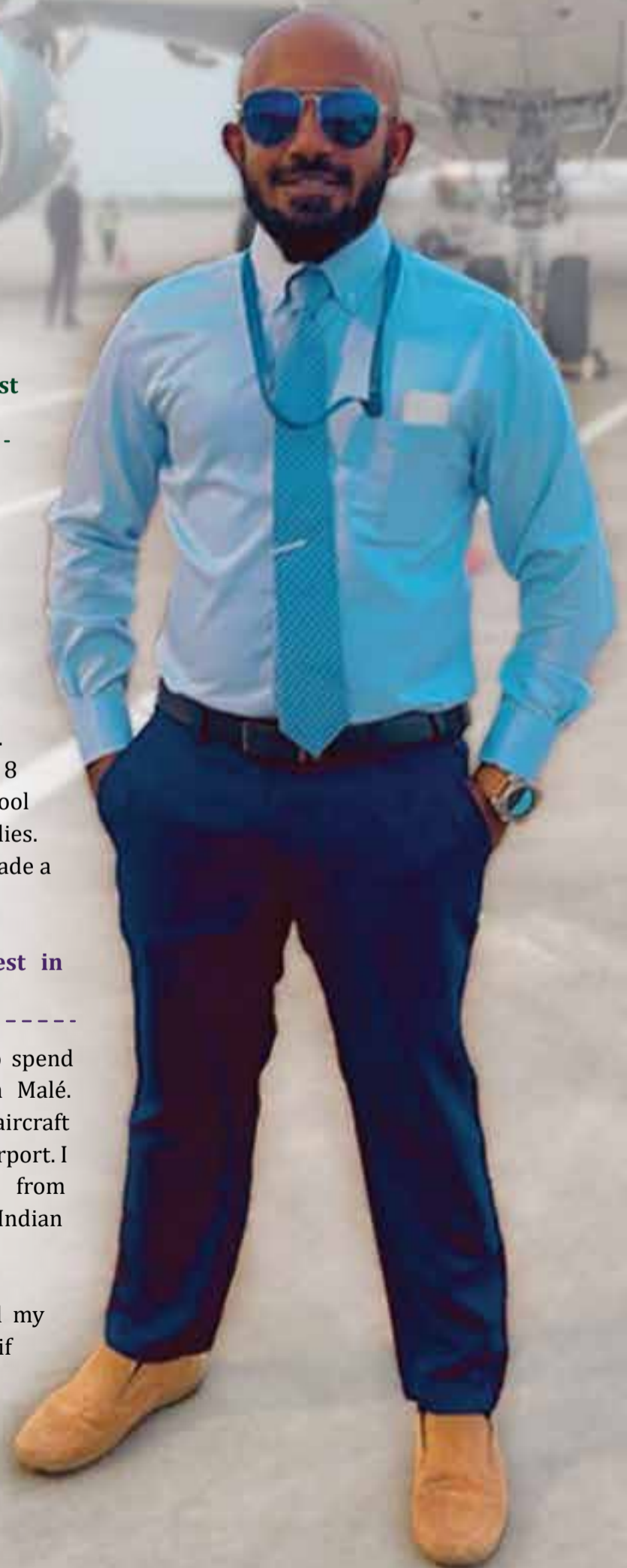
My parents were my biggest supporters. They always encouraged me to stay focused and continue studying.

Another person who helped me a lot was my brother-in-law, Ahmed Mujthaba. From the time I was in Grade 8 he helped take care of my school books and supported my studies. Those small acts of support made a big difference in my life.

What inspired your interest in aviation?

When I was young, I used to spend time at Fisherman's Park in Malé. From there we could see aircraft taking off and landing at the airport. I remember watching planes from airlines such as Air Lanka and Indian Airlines.

Seeing those aircraft sparked my curiosity. I started wondering if one day I could be the person flying those planes. That curiosity eventually grew into a dream.





How did your aviation career begin?

I started my career in aviation in 2008 with Trans Maldivian Airways. My first job was as ground staff. Later I worked as cabin crew before beginning pilot training and eventually becoming a first officer.

Today I serve as an Airbus A320 captain with Maldivian. Looking back, it has been a long journey, but each step helped me reach where I am today.

Where did you complete your pilot training?

I completed my flight training through Dean International and Silver Express. Later I continued my ATPL training at Eagle Aviation Academy in California, United States.

What was the most difficult moment during your training?

Pilot training is usually completed in several phases. When I travelled to the United States for training, I only had enough funds to complete two phases. After finishing those stages, my savings ran out.

At that time there were no student loan options available for aviation training like there are today. Because of this I had to pause my studies for about five

months. It was a very difficult and uncertain period in my life.

However, the people who supported me during those months are people I will always remember with gratitude.

What do you enjoy most about flying?

One of the most rewarding parts of the job is meeting passengers. Sometimes, if time allows, I come out of the cockpit to greet them.

When elderly passengers or children see the pilot come out and speak with them, they are often very happy. They share kind words and appreciation. Those moments make the job very fulfilling.

What is your approach to teamwork as a captain?

Aviation depends heavily on teamwork. I believe it is important for a captain to work alongside the team rather than simply giving instructions.



Briefings, preparations and coordination are all done together. When everyone feels included and respected, the entire team performs better.

How do you prepare for long or international flights?

The most important preparation is rest. Some international flights can take up to twelve hours and are often overnight operations.

Because of that I always try to get enough sleep before a flight. Without proper rest it becomes difficult to maintain the concentration required for such a responsibility.

What has been one of your most memorable flights?

One of the most memorable flights in recent years was the trip to inaugurate the international airport at Hanimaadhoo.

On that flight we carried the President of



the Maldives, Mohamed Muizzu. It was my first presidential flight after becoming a captain.

After landing, the aircraft received a ceremonial water salute, which is something rare and special for pilots. That made the experience even more memorable.

What is the greatest satisfaction you get from being a captain?

Wearing a pilot's uniform often brings respect from people. However, I believe respect should not come only because of a uniform.

A person should be respected for their behavior and discipline as well. That is something I try to maintain in my daily life, both inside and outside the cockpit.



What do passengers often misunderstand about flying?

Many people think pilots simply switch on autopilot and relax for the rest of the flight. In reality, that is not how it works. Autopilot is a computer system that assists with flying the aircraft, but it still requires constant monitoring and input from pilots. It cannot automatically respond to air traffic control instruc-

tions or avoid weather conditions on its own. Pilots must always remain alert and in control.

Do you think artificial intelligence could replace pilots?

I do not believe artificial intelligence will completely replace pilots. Automation is based on information programmed by humans.

If something unexpected happens, human judgement and experience are still required to make the right decisions. For that reason, pilots will continue to play an essential role in aviation.



What has been the most emotional moment of your career?

One of the most emotional moments happened when I was selected as a Dash captain. I shared the news with my father, but soon after he was involved in

an accident. Sadly, he never had the opportunity to see me fly as a captain.

Another difficult experience involved transporting a very sick baby from Addu Atoll to Malé for urgent medical treatment. We did everything we could to reach as quickly as possible, but later we learned that the baby had passed away. That was a heartbreaking moment.

What message would you give to young Maldivians who dream of becoming pilots?

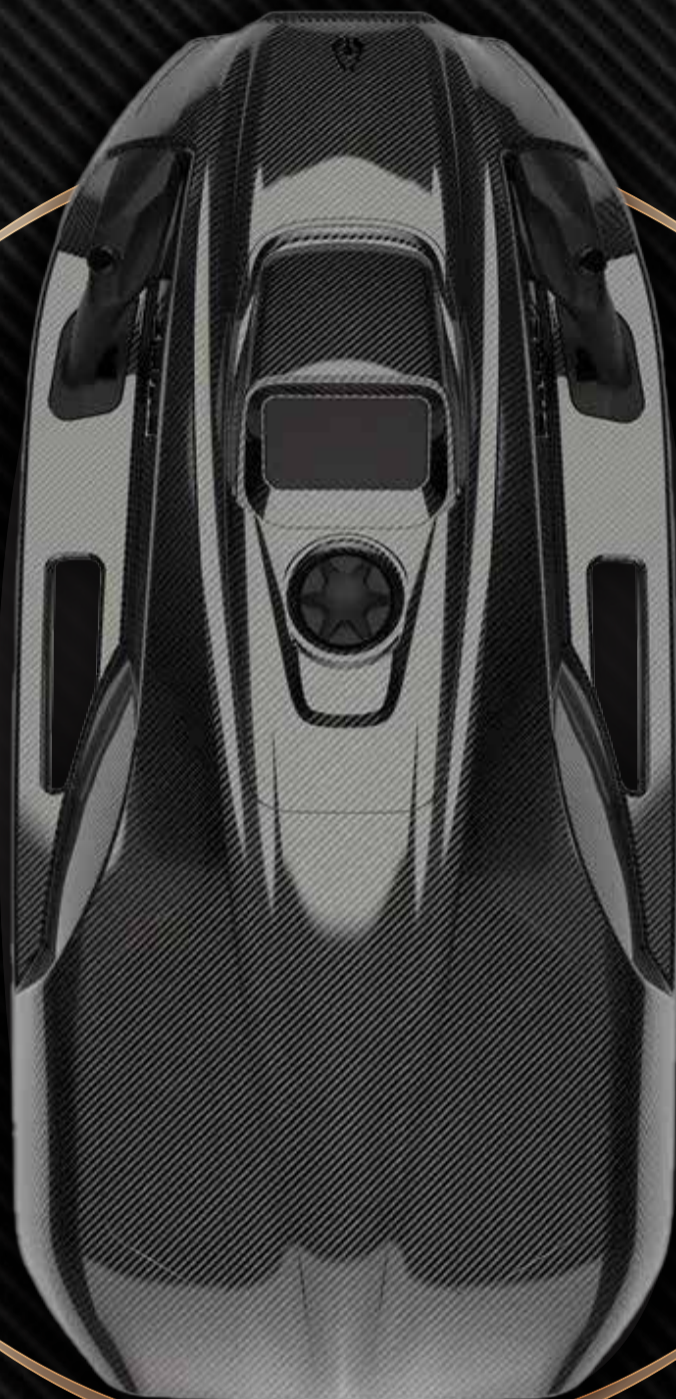


I encourage young people to follow their dreams. Aviation opportunities in the Maldives will continue to grow as new airports and routes are developed. Many Maldivian pilots are already working with international airlines, this created vacancies here and more opportunities will likely emerge in the future. If becoming a pilot is your dream, continue studying and never give up.



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From "Island Home" to "Concrete Jungle": The Silent Crisis of Maldivian Local Tourism

by Ahmed Nasih



In 2009, the Maldives changed the global travel narrative. By opening inhabited islands to local guesthouses, the government dismantled the "one island, one resort" monopoly. It was a revolution that promised a win-win: travelers got an affordable, authentic "island home" experience, and local communities gained a direct stake in the nation's greatest industry.

For a decade, this model flourished. But today, a walk through islands like Maafushi, Dhiffushi, or Hulhumalé reveals a troubling transformation. The charming, low-rise guesthouse is being swallowed by the "City Hotel" towering concrete structures that threaten to turn tropical sanctuaries into urban corridors. As we look to the future of the archipelago, we must ask: Are we building a sustainable industry, or are we building a concrete jungle?

The Death of the "Barefoot" Aesthetic

The original appeal of local tourism was rooted in its scale. A guesthouse was an extension of an islander's home—two stories high, draped in bougainvillea, and designed to breathe with the ocean breeze.

The "City Hotel" model shatters this harmony. These 10-story blocks are designed for maximum density, not maximum beauty. When a building towers over the palm trees, it does more than just block the view; it destroys the "island feel" that travelers fly thousands of miles to find. If a tourist wanted to stay in a high-rise, they would have stayed in Dubai or Singapore. They come to the Maldives to escape the city, not to find a miniature version of it on a remote atoll.



An Archipelago Under Pressure

Beyond the aesthetics lies a deeper, more dangerous environmental reality. The Maldives is one of the most climate-vulnerable nations on Earth. Our islands are fragile ecosystems with limited resources.

- **The Water Crisis:** A 50-room city

- hotel consumes water at a rate the natural freshwater lens cannot support. This forces a total reliance on desalination plants, which are energy-intensive and dump salt-heavy brine back into the lagoons, bleaching the very coral reefs that sustain tourism.
- **The Energy Trap:** These concrete towers are heat traps. Unlike traditional Maldivian architecture that utilizes cross-ventilation, city hotels require 24/7 air conditioning. This spikes the island's carbon footprint and strains local power grids.
- **Waste Management:** Many island infrastructures are still catching up to the 2009 boom. Adding high-density hotels to islands without industrial-scale waste management is a recipe for ecological disaster.



Cultural Dilution: The Loss of the Dhivehi Soul

Sustainability is as much about people as it is about the planet. The guesthouse model encouraged "Community-Based Tourism." Guests ate at local cafés, bought crafts from island artisans, and engaged with the rhythm of island life. City hotels, by contrast, tend to be self-contained. They offer "resort-style" buffets and rooftop pools that keep guests inside the building. This creates a "tourism enclave" that isolates the trav-

eler from the community. When the interaction between the visitor and the local is lost, the soul of local tourism dies with it.



Reclaiming the Horizon

The 2025 updates to the Maldives Tourism Act have provided a framework for better regulation, but the real change must come from the ground up. To protect the archipelago, we must move back toward "Horizontal Growth." Strict Height Restrictions: No building on a local island should be taller than the highest coconut tree. This preserves the

natural skyline and the island's identity. Carrying Capacity Audits: Island Councils must limit the total number of beds based on the island's actual ability to manage waste and water not just on how many buildings can fit on a plot. Architectural Heritage: We must incentivize "Tropical Modernism" designs that use sustainable materials and traditional Maldivian aesthetics rather than the glass-and-steel "Malé style."

The Verdict

The Maldives' greatest luxury isn't a marble lobby; it is the horizon. If we continue to build concrete walls between our guests and the sea, we will lose the very thing that makes us unique. Local tourism was born to empower the islander and protect the island. It is time we return to that vision, before the "Island Home" is lost to the "Concrete Jungle" forever.



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Hooked on Paradise: Sport Fishing in the Maldives

by Ahmed Aziyadh

There is a moment, standing on the deck of a sleek fishing boat as the sun rises over the Indian Ocean, when the expanse of turquoise water seems to stretch into forever. A gentle breeze brushes your face, time slows, and the only sound is the rhythm of waves against the hull. Then a tug at the line.

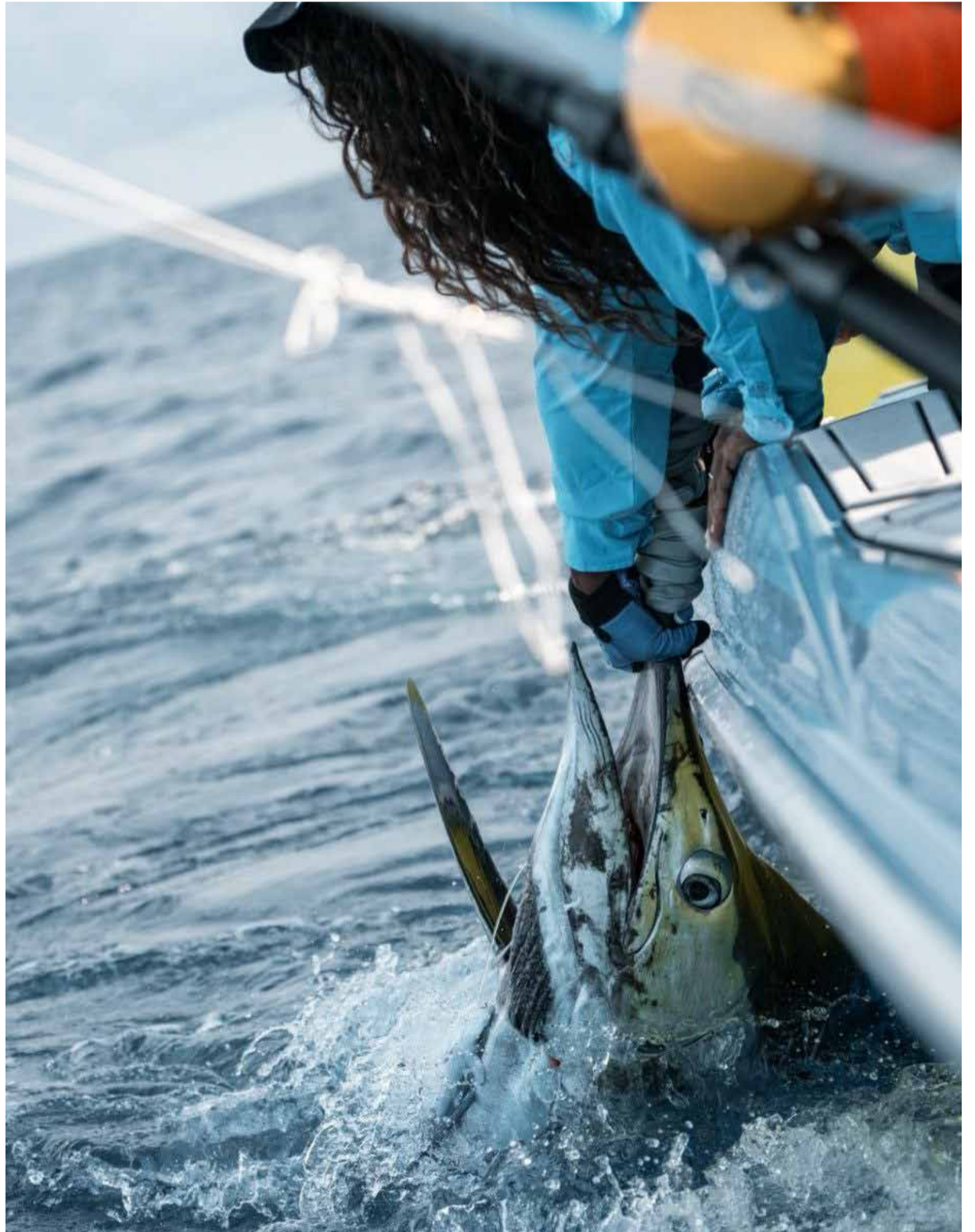
Welcome to sport fishing in the Maldives: where saltwater thrill meets tropical beauty, and the chase becomes an unforgettable adventure.

For many travelers, the Maldives is synonymous with white sand beaches, overwater villas, and coral gardens teeming with life. But beneath the surface lies another world — one where the ocean's pulse is measured not just in colors and currents, but in the powerful strikes of billfish, tunas, and giant trevally. What was once a quiet pursuit for local fishers has transformed into a world class sport fishing destination, drawing anglers from across the globe who seek both the challenge and the magic of land less horizons.

Where the Ocean Rewards the Adventurous

To understand why anglers are drawn here, one must first appreciate the Maldives' geography. This nation is not a single island, but an archipelago of nearly 1,200 coral islands scattered across 26 atolls. Between those atolls stretch deep channels, underwater ledges, and swift currents — the perfect highways for pelagic game fish. Blue water runs close to shore, and from January through November, seasonal shifts bring different species into prime striking range.

In the Maldives, you aren't chasing fish,



you're meeting them where they live. Whether it's battling a powerful black marlin off Gaafu Alifu Atoll or casting for dogtooth tuna near Huvadho's drop offs, every outing is shaped by the ocean's rhythms and the skill of the angler.

A Spectrum of Angling Experiences

Sport fishing here is not one size fits all. It is a mosaic of experiences, each as compelling as the last:



- **Big Game Marlin Fishing:** The Maldives is one of the few places in the world where black marlin sightings and strikes are frequent. These majestic giants can put up battles that last hours, testing skill, strength, and patience.
- **Tuna and Wahoo Pursuits:** Fast, furious, and acrobatic, tuna and wahoo are favorites for anglers seeking high speed action. They tear through lines with bursts of energy that are as thrilling to watch as they are to battle.
- **Giant Trevally and GT Adventures:** In the shallower waters and reef edges, giant trevally lurk, ferocious fighters that love to smash topwater lures. Their explosive strikes are adrenaline in motion.
- **Fly Fishing in the Blue:** For precision anglers, fly fishing offers a surreal experience — drifting over sandbars and flats, casting toward tailing fish under tropical skies. It's strategy and serenity in perfect balance.

Whether you choose deep sea trolling, jigging, popping, or fly fishing, the Maldives delivers both the rush of the catch and the beauty of the setting.

Guides, Vessels, and Local Expertise

Part of what makes Maldivian sport

fishing exceptional is the fusion of local knowledge with international angling standards. Experienced skippers and crew know the water like poets know rhythm, they read currents, weather, and signs that others might miss. Their expertise turns every expedition into a collaborative dance between human skill and ocean instinct.

Modern boats range from agile skiffs for coastal fishing to fully equipped sportfishing yachts with tackle for every pursuit. Many operators tailor trips to passengers' skill levels — from first time anglers eager for their first strike to seasoned veterans chasing trophy fish.

The Taste of the Catch

In the Maldives, the celebration doesn't end once the fish hits the deck. Part of the sport fishing experience is feasting on the catch — grilled tuna steaks seasoned with local lime and chili, sashimi prepared with island flair, or a freshly seared wahoo plated over aromatic rice. It's a full circle connection from sea to table, where the ocean's gifts nourish body and soul.

A Growing Sport with Sustainable Roots

As sport fishing grows in popularity, so too does the emphasis on conservation and responsible angling. Catch and release practices, tag and track programs, and ethical handling ensure

that fish populations remain healthy for generations of anglers to come. Many operators work with marine biologists and community stewards to balance sport with long term sustainability — a philosophy as deep as the waters themselves.

Beyond the Catch: Island Culture and Hidden Gems

The appeal of sport fishing in the Maldives is not just the fish, it's the rhythm of days spent between rises and sets of the sun, the laughter of new friends over freshly cooked fish, and evenings under impossibly bright stars. It is the allure of remote sandbanks where footprints never settle and island communities where stories of the sea are part of everyday life.

In long haul sunsets that glow like embers over glassy water, many anglers realize something profound: the Maldives is more than a destination, it is a companion on the journey, an endless horizon of possibility.

Why the World Is Hooked

From big game battles with marlin to tranquil mornings fly fishing over glowing flats, the Maldives offers a unique blend of challenge, beauty, and soul. This is a place where every cast feels like an invitation — to test one's skill, to embrace the unexpected, and to fall a little deeper in love with the ocean. For those who seek adventure, the Maldives is not just a point on a map, it's the lure that draws you back again and again.



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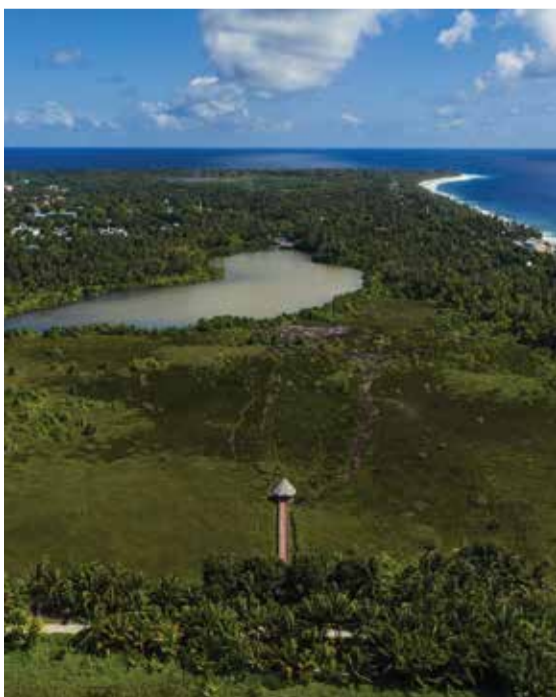
Fuvahmulah: The Singular Jewel of the Maldives

by Ali Rilwan

Hidden in the southernmost reaches of the Maldives lies Fuvahmulah, an island unlike any other in the nation. Singular in its geography and rich in ecological diversity, it offers a rare glimpse into a natural world that is both isolated and remarkably vibrant. For travelers seeking an experience beyond postcard-perfect beaches, this island holds stories of freshwater lakes, rolling mounds, and thriving wildlife.

Fuvahmulah's geographic uniqueness is immediately apparent as it exists as a solitary landmass rather than part of a typical atoll. It rises from the ocean as a self-contained ecosystem, giving it the status of being the only one-island atoll in the Maldives. Measuring roughly five kilometers by two kilometers, it is the largest single island in the country. Its structure differs from narrow ribbons of sand, presenting a more compact and undulating terrain. Gentle mounds and ridges punctuate the island, adding subtle elevation and creating pockets of biodiversity not found on flatter islands.

Perhaps the most remarkable feature of Fuvahmulah is its freshwater resources,



boasting five freshwater lakes including Bandaara Kilhi and Dhadimagi Kilhi. These lakes are fed by rainfall and natural springs, a rarity in a country where most islands struggle with limited freshwater. They serve as critical habitats for migratory birds, turning the island into a birdwatcher's paradise. These bodies have shaped local life for generations, allowing the cultivation of crops like taro, watermelon, and bananas in soil enriched by nearby marshes.

Fuvahmulah's biodiversity extends to a mosaic of coconut groves, breadfruit trees, and endemic plants. Its coastal waters are equally extraordinary, with vibrant coral reefs hosting a kaleidoscope of fish and sea turtles. For divers, Fuvahmulah is legendary as one of the few places where tiger sharks can be observed with regularity. This combination of terrestrial and marine ecosystems makes the island a living laboratory of natural diversity.

The island's wetlands and marshes add environmental significance, acting as natural buffers that absorb excess water and prevent soil erosion. Over centuries, the accumulation of organic matter has produced nutrient-rich soil, allowing plants to flourish in harmony. This

balance demonstrates the resilience of the environment. Isolation has also shaped a culture with traditions deeply



connected to the land and sea. Today, ecotourism offers a sustainable pathway for development, inviting visitors to explore these delicate ecosystems while preserving what makes Fuvahmulah special.

What sets Fuvahmulah apart is its capacity to surprise, containing a remarkable array of natural features within its compact area. It offers an intimate connection with the natural world that cannot be replicated elsewhere in the archipelago. Fuvahmulah remains a symbol of ecological resilience, reminding us that the Maldives is a place where geography and environment converge to create unique stories.

The Maldives Effect:

Why the World Falls in Love with These Islands

by Fathimath Shafath

When a traveler first glimpses the Maldives from the sky, it is impossible not to gasp. Tiny atolls scattered across the Indian Ocean, each encircled by shimmering turquoise waters and kissed by sun-drenched beaches, look like islands plucked straight from a dream. But the Maldives is more than a postcard; it is a destination that has captured hearts, inspired wanderlust, and become one of the world's most coveted travel experiences.

A Symphony of Nature



The first reason visitors arrive is simple: nature. The Maldives is home to some of the clearest waters on the planet, offering visibility up to thirty meters underwater. This crystalline ocean is a playground for divers, snorkelers, and marine enthusiasts, where coral reefs

flourish with an astonishing array of colors and life. Hawksbill turtles glide gracefully past branching corals, while manta rays and whale sharks glide silently beneath. Even casual swimmers are mesmerized by schools of shimmering fish that seem to dance in perfect synchrony.

Above the surface, the Maldives' geography is a spectacle in itself. Each island feels intimate, whether it is a tiny, secluded speck of sand or a larger inhabited atoll with flourishing communities. Palm trees sway in rhythm with the trade winds, lagoons shift shades of turquoise and sapphire throughout the day, and sunsets paint the sky in deep oranges, pinks, and purples. It is a sensory feast that travelers find almost impossible to replicate anywhere else.

Luxury and Privacy Redefined



Beyond its natural beauty, the Maldives has become synonymous with luxury travel. Resorts and overwater villas dot the islands, offering an experience that feels entirely personal. Here, guests can wake to the gentle lap of the waves beneath their feet, enjoy a private infinity pool overlooking a vast lagoon, or dine under the stars on a floating platform. For honeymooners, couples, and those seeking solitude, the Maldives is a sanctuary, a place where privacy is woven into every experience.

But the appeal isn't limited to high-end luxury. Over the past decade, the Maldives has diversified, introducing guesthouses, boutique hotels, and safari vessels that allow travelers with smaller budgets to experience island life without compromise. This inclusivity has



expanded its reach, ensuring that the magic of the Maldives is accessible to more travelers than ever before.

Adventure and Exploration

For many, the Maldives is not just a retreat but a place of adventure and discovery. Surfing in waves shaped by the Indian Ocean, sailing between islands on dhonis, and exploring uninhabited sandbanks awaken the sense of exploration. Wildlife tours offer glimpses of dolphins, seabirds, and even dugongs, while scuba diving courses bring novices face-to-face with underwater wonders that most people only see in documentaries. The Maldives is both a playground and a classroom, a destination where natural beauty inspires curiosity.

A Cultural Tapestry

While the turquoise waters draw visitors, the islands' human story keeps them enchanted. The Maldives has a rich history influenced by traders, explorers, and seafarers from across the Indian Ocean. From the vibrant markets of Malé, where locals sell fresh tuna and handwoven mats, to island festivals that celebrate traditional music, dance, and cuisine, there is a cultural rhythm that complements the natural spectacle. Travelers often find themselves immersed in the lives of communities that have lived sustainably on these islands for centuries, learning how



traditions blend with modernity.

Sustainability and Connection

Increasingly, tourists are drawn to the



Maldives because it represents an ideal of sustainability and environmental stewardship. Many resorts have embraced eco-friendly practices, from coral restoration projects to solar energy initiatives, ensuring that the delicate

marine ecosystem remains vibrant. Visitors leave not only with memories of beauty but with a sense of connection to a place where nature and humanity coexist harmoniously.

Why the Maldives Matters

The importance of the Maldives extends beyond its beaches. It is a global icon of tropical paradise, a symbol of what sustainable island tourism can achieve, and a critical economic engine for the nation. For travelers, it is a reminder of the power of nature to inspire and heal, a place where time slows, and priorities shift. For the world, the Maldives is a lesson in preserving fragile ecosystems while sharing them responsibly, proving that tourism can be both indulgent and conscientious.

In the end, travelers return again and again not just for the sunsets or the luxury villas, but for the feeling the Maldives evokes: wonder, serenity, and a profound sense of escape. It is a place that touches more than just the eye; it touches the soul.

Whether it is the clear waters, the coral reefs, the cultural rhythms, or the promise of unforgettable memories, the Maldives continues to captivate the world. And as travelers depart, they carry with them a singular truth: the Maldives is not just a destination, it is an experience that stays with you long after the tide recedes.



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



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