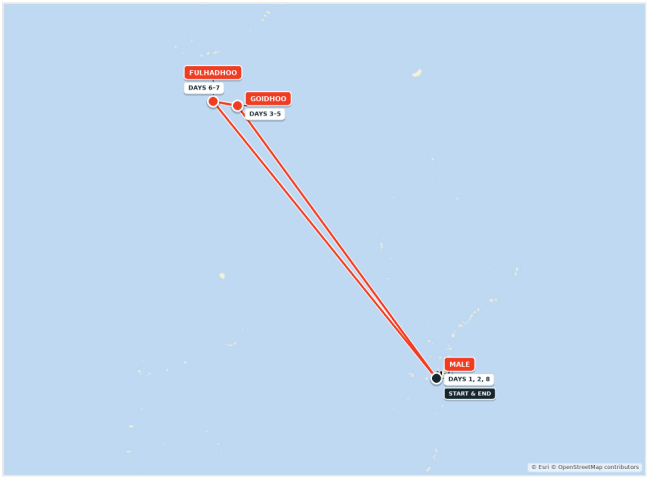
ENCOUNTERS TRAVEL

Your passport to adventure

Maldives Island Escape

COUNTRY(IES)	Maldives
TOUR TYPE	Small Group
TRANSPORT	Minivan & speedboats
GROUP SIZE	Min: 2 | Max: 8
DURATION	8 days
STARTS	Male, Maldives
ENDS	Male, Maldives
MEALS	Breakfasts - 7, Lunches - 0, Dinners - 6

TOUR ROUTE MAP **8 Days**



ROUTE: **Male** (Start) → **Goidhoo** → **Fulhadhoo** → **Male** (End)

HIGHLIGHTS

Snorkel marine rich tropical waters, Learn how to make mashuni roshi, Discover mangroves, seagrass and lakes, Delve into the history and culture of the people, Make an impact. Complete a community beach clean.

Itinerary

DAY 1 **Arrive Male, overnight in Hulhumale**

Land at Malé Airport and make the short transfer to your guesthouse in Hulhumalé. Once there, visit the beach area and ease into the slower pace of the Maldives, with time to enjoy the coastal surroundings and become familiar with this residential island close to the capital. The simple arrival period gives you space to recover from your flight while getting your first feel for the country.

ACTIVITIES

- **Arrive at Male Airport**
  Arrive at Male International Airport and meet your tour representative for assistance. Begin your journey into the Maldives before transferring to your guesthouse.
- **Drive from Male Airport to Hulhumale Guesthouse**
  Transfer by airport shuttle taxi to Hulhumale, located just minutes from the airport. Settle into your guesthouse and enjoy your first glimpse of island life.

- **Explore Hulhumale Beach Area**
  Explore the nearby beach and local cafés a short walk from your guesthouse. Enjoy your first taste of island life after your flight.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS	EXTRAS
Hulhumale guesthouse	None	Extra day in Hulhumale - pre-tour, Single room supplement (MASHMM)

DAY 2 Male City tour & Transfer to Goidhoo. Traditional afternoon tea

This experience combines an introduction to the Maldivian capital with a transition to relaxed island life in Goidhoo. A walking tour through Malé offers insight into the city’s streets, landmarks, and everyday rhythms before departing the capital by speedboat. The journey to Goidhoo shifts the focus to a quieter island setting, where local culture comes to the forefront. Time on the island includes a visit to a local café to enjoy traditional hedika snacks and connect with community life. The day ends with a sunset swim at Goidhoo Beach, capturing the calm atmosphere of the island as daylight fades.

ACTIVITIES

- **Walking Tour of Male City**
  Discover Male's historic core including markets, mosques and cultural sites. Learn about local traditions and daily life in the capital.
- **Travel from Speedboat Male to Goidhoo**
  Travel by speedboat from Male to the local island of Goidhoo. Enjoy scenic ocean views as you enter a quieter atoll region.
- **Explore Local Café for Hedika in Goidhoo**
  Sample Maldivian hedika snacks in a local café. Enjoy sweet and savoury treats paired with black tea as part of a traditional afternoon ritual.
- **Sunset Swim in Goidhoo Beach**
  End your day with a peaceful swim from Goidhoo's beach. Enjoy the calm waters and soft colours of the evening sky.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Goidhoo guesthouse	Breakfast,Dinner

DAY 3 Guided snorkeling and island tour.

This experience focuses on the natural and cultural character of Goidhoo Island in the Maldives, combining marine exploration with insight into local life. Guided snorkelling introduces the surrounding reefs, highlighting coral formations and marine species found in the island’s lagoon and nearby waters. Time on land includes a cultural walk through Goidhoo, offering context on village life, traditions, and daily rhythms. The combination of sea and

land activities creates a balanced view of the island environment. Together, the experience reflects the close relationship between Goidhoo’s community and its marine surroundings.

ACTIVITIES

- **Guided Snorkelling in Goidhoo Reefs**
  Snorkel vibrant reefs with your guide assisting in spotting marine life. Learn safe practices while exploring colourful fish and coral.
- **Explore Goidhoo Island in Cultural Walk**
  Explore Goidhoo on foot and learn about its unique history including ancestral stories linked to freed African heritage. Gain insight into island culture and community life.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Goidhoo guesthouse	Breakfast,Dinner

DAY 4 Mangrove kayaking and the Oliver Ridley Project

This experience highlights the quieter, nature-focused side of Goidhoo Island in the Maldives, combining outdoor activity, relaxation, and environmental learning. Kayaking through the island’s mangrove channels offers a close-up view of this unique ecosystem and its role in coastal protection. Free time on Goidhoo allows you to enjoy the island at a relaxed pace, whether along the beach or within the village. An environmental briefing led by the Olive Ridley Project provides insight into marine conservation efforts, with a focus on sea turtles and reef health. Together, the day reflects Goidhoo’s strong connection to both land and sea.

ACTIVITIES

- **Mangrove Kayaking in Goidhoo**
  Paddle through Goidhoo's mangrove lakes while learning about this vital ecosystem. Discover how mangroves protect marine habitats and support local communities.
- **Free Time in Goidhoo**
  Enjoy a relaxed afternoon on the island. Choose to swim, rest on the beach or explore more of Goidhoo at your own pace.
- **Environmental Briefing in Olive Ridley Project**
  Learn about turtle research and rescue work done by the Olive Ridley Project. Understand how your snorkelling photos support identification efforts.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Goidhoo guesthouse	Breakfast,Dinner

DAY 5 Ferry to Fulhadhoo. Turtle snorkelling adventure. Visit one of the worlds top 25 beaches!

Travel by ferry from Goidhoo to Fulhadhoo and settle into the quieter island surroundings before heading out for a turtle snorkelling trip. Explore the reef in clear shallow water and look for marine life under natural conditions, with sightings varying from day to day. Back on land, join a tropical forest walk through the island interior and experience the contrast between Fulhadhoo’s coral environment and its green inland vegetation.

ACTIVITIES

- **Travel from Ferry Goidhoo to Fulhadhoo**
  Travel by public ferry from Goidhoo to the serene island of Fulhadhoo. Settle into your guesthouse before beginning your next adventure.
- **Turtle Snorkelling Trip in Fulhadhoo**
  Snorkel reefs where turtles commonly feed among soft corals. Follow your guide's turtle code of conduct for a respectful wildlife encounter.
- **Tropical Forest Walk in Fulhadhoo**
  Take a guided walk through Fulhadhoo's forest to reach its famous beach. Enjoy sunset views at one of the world's top-ranked beaches.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Fulhadhoo guesthouse	Breakfast,Dinner

DAY 6 Breakfast Cooking class. Coral nursery visit. Learn about the Manta Trust.

Begin with a Maldivian breakfast cooking class on Fulhadhoo and learn about everyday island flavours and preparation methods. Continue to the coral nursery for a closer look at local reef-restoration work, then join an environmental briefing with the Manta Trust to learn more about manta rays and marine conservation in the surrounding atolls. The day connects local food traditions with practical efforts to protect the ocean environment.

ACTIVITIES

- **Maldivian Breakfast Cooking Class in Fulhadhoo**
  Learn to prepare traditional Maldivian dishes such as mashuni and roshi with local women. Share the meal and gain insight into community-led initiatives.
- **Explore Coral Nursery in Fulhadhoo**
  Visit a local coral nursery to learn how coral fragments are propagated and monitored. Understand the importance of reef restoration in the Maldives.
- **Environmental Briefing - Manta Trust Introduction**
  Learn about manta ray conservation and local environmental monitoring work. Your guide explains how sightings contribute to research.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Fulhadhoo guesthouse	Breakfast,Dinner

DAY 7 Coral reef snorkelling. Participate in an afternoon island clean-up to give back

Snorkel around Fulhadhoo’s coral reef and spend time exploring the underwater environment that surrounds the island. Marine life varies naturally, making each session dependent on sea conditions and what happens to be present. Back on shore, take part in a beach clean-up and contribute directly to keeping the coastline clear of waste, linking time in the water with a simple hands-on conservation activity.

ACTIVITIES

- **Coral Reef Snorkelling in Fulhadhoo**
  Snorkel colourful reefs with chances to see manta rays, turtles and reef fish. Learn and follow manta interaction guidelines before entering the water.
- **Beach Clean in Up – Fulhadhoo**
  Give back to the island through a community beach clean. Cool off afterward with a refreshing ocean swim.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Fulhadhoo Guesthouse	Breakfast,Dinner

DAY 8 Speedboat to the airport for departure

Leave Fulhadhoo by speedboat and travel across the atolls towards Malé Airport, exchanging the quieter island setting for the country’s main international gateway. The crossing provides a final look at open water, reefs and scattered islands before the journey reaches the airport area. After arrival, continue with your onward flight arrangements and bring the Maldives stay to a straightforward close.

ACTIVITIES

- **Travel from Speedboat Fulhadhoo to Male Airport**
  Travel by speedboat from Fulhadhoo to Male for your departure. Arrive at the airport where your tour concludes.
- **Departure from Malé Airport**
  Your tour concludes at Malé Airport, where you complete departure formalities and continue with your onward flight.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS	EXTRAS
N/A	Breakfast	Day-use room & airport transfers in Hulhumale, Extra day in Hulhumale - post-tour

INCLUDED

- 7 nights accommodation at a local guesthouse/hotel
- All transport and transfers
- Return transfer by vehicle & public speedboat
- Meals as stated in the itinerary
- Villimale Walking Tour
- Island tours and Hedika Experience
- 2 Snorkeling tours included equipment
- Mangrove kayaking
- Maldivian Cooking Experience
- Coral Nursery Experience
- Sandbank hopping including snorkeling equipment
- Local tax ($6 green tax per person per night, 10% service charge, and 17% GST)
- Free 30-day tourist visa on arrival to all nationalities
- Local guide throughout

EXCLUDED

- International flights (available on request)
- Travel insurance (compulsory, get a quote here)
- Meals not indicated in the itinerary
- Drinks, snacks, tips and other personal expenses (e.g. laundry)
- Any other items not mentioned above

Tour Options

Our tours are designed to include all that you need to enjoy a really special time in the destination you're visiting. However, we do also offer some extra options to complement the tour and add some additional sightseeing or activities, or some extra time at either end of the tour.

All accommodation based options (e.g. Single supplements, extra nights, cruise upgrades) should be booked and paid for in advance so that we can make the appropriate arrangements. Other options may either be booked and paid for in advance or while you are on the tour, though we recommend booking in advance to ensure there are no issues with availability.

Many options are priced the same throughout the year, but some may incur single or high season supplements , full details are given on the tour reservation form or on request.

4-night Gulhi Island Extension

Min numbers: 1

Tropic Tree Maldives, a charming and affordable hotel, is located on the local island of Gulhi in the Maldives, just a 25-minute (21km) journey from Velana International Airport (MLE) in Malé.

This intimate hotel features 12 tastefully decorated rooms, some of which boast balconies and access to a rooftop terrace. From here, guests can enjoy stunning sea views and stargazing opportunities. All rooms are equipped with air conditioning, an en-suite bathroom, TV, Wi-Fi, a room safe, and a mini-fridge.

Guests can dine at Tropic Platter, the hotel's in-house restaurant located in the ground floor garden area, which serves breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

Tropic Tree Maldives offers a variety of entertainment and activities, including excursions to other islands, visits to the capital island Malé, fishing trips, cruising, surfing, diving, snorkelling, sandbank barbecues, trips to picnic islands, dolphin watching, and various water sports.

This extension includes transfers to and from Gulhi by public boat, along with four nights' accommodation and breakfast. The rate is based on two people sharing, and single room supplements will apply.

Extra day in Hulhumale - pre-tour

Min numbers: 1

Is your flight arriving early or departing late? You can easily add an extra day in Hulhumale either at the start or the end of your tour. The price is based on the Hulhumale Inn and is per person, with a minimum of 2 people sharing. Single room supplements apply. Your airport transfer is included.

Extra day in Hulhumale - post-tour

Min numbers: 1

Is your flight arriving early or departing late? You can easily add an extra day in Hulhumale either at the start or the end of your tour. The price is based on the Hulhumale Inn and is per person, with a minimum of 2 people sharing. Single room supplements apply. Your airport transfer is included.

Important Notes

1 **Accommodation**

The guesthouse accommodation on this tour is designed to provide a balance of comfort, local atmosphere and value for money. These are not luxury properties, but are clean, comfortable, have friendly staff, and often provide some excellent local food. A range of mid-level and luxurious island resort stays are available as extensions at the end of the tour for those looking for some extra comfort and luxury.

Please check the Single Room Supplement option for details on room sharing options and charges for solo travellers on this tour.

2 **Booking & Payment**

If you would like to book a place on this tour, please complete the online reservation form on our website (via the Dates & Prices tab on the tour page). You may make a deposit or full payment online, or just hold a reservation if you prefer (full payments are due 8 weeks before departure). We will then contact you with more details about how

to complete your booking. Payments may be made by debit or credit card (subject to a card processing fee), or by making a bank transfer, or posting us a cheque/bank draft. Full details will be provided in your booking confirmation email. Please contact us if you would like any more information or have any questions before making a booking.

3 Financial Security

We are a UK registered company and are committed to providing our customers with financial protection to provide peace of mind and to allow you to book with confidence.
We have therefore partnered with Trust My Travel Ltd., which provides financial protection services to over 2000 partners around the world. Funds paid to us by our customers are protected via an Insurance policy held by Trust My Travel. Each traveller and the description of services sold is declared against Trust My Travel's insurance policy directly against our financial failure. In the event of our insolvency, you will be refunded for any unfulfilled products and/or repatriation to the UK (where applicable). Please see our website or booking conditions for more information.

4 Responsible Tourism

It is impossible not to have an impact on the local environment, cultures and eco-systems when you travel. However, it is very possible to try and ensure that these impacts are as limited, or positive as possible. We are committed to ensuring that we try to leave our host countries in a better state than we found them and encourage and assist our travellers to help us with this.
The following are a few simple tips that require very little effort on your part but which will help ensure that any effect you have on the locations you visit is positive rather than negative.

- Don't prejudge: Things in different countries will almost certainly be different. That doesn't make them worse or inferior, just different.
- Communicate: Don't expect locals to speak your language. Take the trouble to learn a few words or phrases of the local language. Don't worry about sounding silly. Most locals are patient and accommodating and appreciate you making the effort to communicate in their language.
- Conserve energy: Be careful not to waste valuable resources. Use local resources sparingly. Switch off lights, air-conditioning and fans when you leave the hotel room and don't waste water. Remove superfluous packaging. Many countries have far less efficient waste disposal systems than ours. Remove packaging from newly acquired items before leaving home.
- Don't litter: No matter how untidy or dirty the country you're travelling in may look to you, avoid littering, as there is no need to add to the environment's stress. Many of the countries we visit have a tough challenge dealing with rubbish and waste. Please consider taking home as much plastic waste as you can (e.g. water bottles).
- Choose environmentally friendly products: By using environmentally friendly (bio degradable) sun creams, shampoos and detergents you can help reduce pollution.
- Respect local customs and traditions: As you are a guest in these countries, you should also comply with the local customs. If you are friendly and well mannered, the locals will reciprocate and it will only enhance your

experience. It's important to follow dress and behaviour guidelines especially when visiting religious or sacred sites (your tour leader will advise you how best to do this).

- If a client commits an illegal act the client may be excluded from the tour and Encounters Travel shall cease to have responsibility to/for them. No refund will be given for any unused services.

All porters are employed and equipped following guidelines set by the International Porter Protection Group (IPPG).

5 Follow Us Online

You can stay in touch with us online by following us on Facebook and Twitter. We post updates on relevant travel news in our destination countries, special offers and discounts and other interesting travel related news and information.

www.facebook.com/encounterstravel

https://x.com/encounterstravl (yes, without the 'e')

6 Travel Insurance

Travel insurance is compulsory on all of our tours and needs to cover personal accident & liability, medical expenses and repatriation, travel delay & abandonment. We also strongly recommend that you take out cover against cancellation and lost/stolen baggage. Personal medical insurance does not normally provide sufficient cover and is generally not suitable for travel on our tours. You will not be able to join your tour if you have not provided us with details of your insurance or if you arrive without cover in place (no refunds will be due in this event).

Considering travel insurance for your trip? World Nomads Travel Insurance offers coverage for more than 150 adventure activities as well as emergency medical, lost luggage, trip cancellation and more.

If your tour includes car hire, or if you plan to arrange a hot air balloon flight locally or do some scuba diving during your tour, you should check the small print in your policy to make sure these are covered (these are covered in our policy). Please also check the maximum altitude that you will be reaching and that full cover including emergency evacuation is provided up to this altitude.

If you are taking expensive camera gear or other electronic equipment with you then please check the coverage and the fine print of your policy to ensure that you have sufficient cover.

IMPORTANT: We must have your travel insurance details (policy number and type of insurance) before you depart or you may not be allowed to join the tour. If you haven't told us already, please let us know the details when you can. You should take a paper copy of your insurance policy with you as you may be asked to show this at the start of the tour.

Covid-19

Before purchasing any travel insurance, please check the coverage provided for situations related to Covid-19, and for the rules about government travel advice. Your normal policy may not be suitable.

7 Before you travel

It is important when considering and preparing to travel anywhere in the world that you have a good understanding of the country you are visiting, its laws and customs, and the possible risks and situations that may occur. This includes specific risks related to your itinerary (eg. does it involve water & can you swim, are you fit enough for the activities included), as well as more general risks such as terrorism and natural disasters.

General details and links to more information about health risks, visa requirements, money, and travel insurance are given in these tour notes. We recommend that you re-read all these before your departure as well as the small print of your travel insurance policy so you know exactly what is covered and what is not.

You should take copies of your important travel documents with you and ideally also store them online securely as a backup. Make sure that you have given us your emergency contact details and told that person where and when you are travelling. Ensure you take enough money with you and that you have access to emergency funds.

Finally, you should read through and stay updated with the current official government travel advice for your destination. We are registered partners with the UK Foreign Office's 'Travel Aware' campaign which provides further useful and invaluable information.

travel aware
gov.uk/travelaware

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8 Reduce Plastic Waste with Water-to-Go Filter bottles

Traveling responsibly means minimizing plastic waste, but staying hydrated on the go is essential. At Encounters Travel we are committed to reducing single-use plastics, which is why we've partnered with Water-to-Go. Their portable filtration system removes over 99.9% of contaminants from any non-saltwater source, turning even questionable water sources into safe drinking water.

Given that tap water is un-safe to drink in many of the countries in which we operate, we recommend purchasing a Water-to-Go bottle prior to departure. This will help you avoid the use of single use plastic bottles and keep you hydrated on the go.

Save big! Get a huge 25% off your Water-to-Go bottle and other Water-to-Go products (such as filters, lids, and carriers). Use code **ENCOUNTERS25** at checkout (valid in the UK, USA and Canada).

How Water-to-Go Technology works:

- Their reusable, BPA free water bottles contain their own unique 3-in-1 filtration technology effectively providing clean safe drinking water from any non-salt water source around the world.
- Three different (1 traditional and 2 nano) technologies are combined in one filter cartridge to remove up to 99.9999% of microbiological contaminants in water.

The three technologies used in a Water-to-Go filter are:

- Mechanical filtration – A tiny pore size, so small contaminants can’t fit through.

- Electrical – A positive charge reduces the pore size even further and attracts contaminants like a magnet, trapping them inside the filter.
- Activated Carbon – Unlike most carbon based filters, instead of using adhesives to glue the carbon particles together, (which vastly reduces the carbon's efficiency) it is contained within the membrane, helping to reduce contaminants whilst eliminating bad tastes and odours. Try filtering water from your tap at home and taste the difference!

Water-to-Go filter bottles deliver safe, healthy water worldwide

- Water-to-Go filters remove bacteria, viruses, waterborne disease, protozoa, heavy metals such as lead as well as harmful chemicals.
- Their filters remove Chlorine and Fluoride from tap water.
- The filter will eliminate harmful contaminants from the water but allow beneficial minerals such as sodium and magnesium to pass through leaving you with the healthiest water possible.
- Water-to-Go filters have been independently tested against internationally recognised standards by industry specialists including The London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (UK), BCS Laboratories (USA), Bangalore Test House (India) and IMI (China).

Use Water-to-Go products and you'll be healthier, wealthier and helping to make the world a better place!

- Depending on filter size, each Water-to-Go filter is able to replace 260 or 400 single-use plastic water bottles!
- They ensure you have access to safe water anywhere in the world without ever having to buy environmentally damaging bottled water.
- Their water bottles deliver safe, clean drinking water at just 5p per litre.
- The filter membrane is biodegradable and the shrouds are recyclable.
- The water bottles are used and approved by everyone from backpackers to commuters, gym users to expecting mums. Perfect for everyday, outdoor and travel.

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9 Private & Tailor-made Tours

While our group departures offer a fantastic way to explore with like-minded travellers, we understand that some guests prefer a more exclusive experience. Most of our group tours can be booked on a private basis, allowing you to enjoy the same expert-led routes with your own dedicated party. The primary advantage of choosing a private arrangement is the flexibility it provides; we can easily customise the itinerary to include your preferred style of accommodation or adjust the pace to suit your needs. Private tours can be run on the same start days as our group tours, or on other dates. However, some activities within our trips are restricted to particular days of the week - we will advise you on anything like this that we need to work around. Pricing will be based on the number of travellers in your party, and any customisations you may like to make.

For those seeking something truly unique, our specialist sales team is available to collaborate with you on a completely tailor-made tour, designed from the ground up to match your specific interests, accommodation level and requirements.

To request a quotation for a private or tailor-made tour, please contact us.

10 Group Size

We are committed to working with small numbers in the Maldives as we feel it is appropriate for the country and the activities included on our tours. Our Maldives small-group departures are set to have a minimum of 2 and maximum of 14 travellers. Private tours and boat charters are also available from 1 to 14 people. If you have a larger party please contact us for more information about the best way to arrange activities for your group.

11 Transport and Transfers

Local island tours:

Private vehicles are used for sightseeing tours and airport transfers. Public ferries or scheduled speedboat services are used for crossings between Male/Hulumale, and the various inhabited local islands visited on our tours. Domestic flights are used between Male and Gan. Speedboat transfers or sea-planes are used for transfers to and from island resorts. A range of motor boats and Dhonis may also be used for the water based activities included in our tours. All boats carry sufficient life jackets for our travelers. Safety/emergency procedure briefings will be provided by your guide or the boat crew at the start of each journey.

Marine Conservation Cruise:

This cruise departs from Male on day 1, between 12 and 1pm, therefore an early morning arrival is recommended. On day 8, a group departure transfer is provided to Male Airport, which will arrive by 9am. If you have an earlier departure, a private transfer can be arranged at an additional cost.

Arrival arrangements:

All our tours include an airport meet and greet and transfer service on the first day of your tour. Our rep. will be holding an Encounters Travel signboard with your name displayed for easy identification. If you can't find our representative, our emergency contact numbers are given on your tour confirmation voucher. No refund is available on missed transfers or portions of your trip owing to incorrect flight details being provided or delayed flight arrival. Any additional cost incurred in order to meet up with your group is at your own expense.

Departure arrangements:

Our local island tour itineraries will return you to Malé airport from Maafushi Island in time for flight departures after about midday. If you have an earlier flight departure, please let us know as soon as possible as you may need to book an extra speedboat transfer (at extra cost). If you have a late afternoon/evening flight departure, then we offer a range of options to help fill your day. Please see the tour itinerary and options section for details.

If your tour includes a domestic flight back to Male at the end of the tour (for example from Gan) then this flight will be timed to ensure you catch your international flight.

Most of the resort extension options that we offer are based close enough to Malé airport that the resort’s own standard boat transfer service will be able to get you to the airport in time for flights departing at any time of day. However some resorts may charge extra for very early departures, especially if sea plane transfers are required. Please contact us for details and any extra costs if you have an early flight departure before confirming your flight arrangements.

Sailing safari tours will be customised to ensure you are at the airport in plenty of time for your departure flight(s).

There is currently a departure tax in place at Malé airport. Please ensure you have US$13 p/p in cash on you to pay this tax when you leave.

If your flights arrive/depart before/after the tour starts/ends then we will be very happy to arrange additional accommodation and airport transfers for you. We will aim to book these in the same hotel as the main tour, though this will be subject to availability (upgraded hotels are also available on request). If you do not book your additional accommodation through us, then our arrival/departure service is not included and you will need to make your own airport transfer arrangements.

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12 Entrance Fees

All relevant entry fees, island landing fees and permits are included in your tour price.

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13 Tipping

While an accepted part of the culture and customs in the Maldives, tipping is always optional, and any amounts paid should reflect excellent service.

It is normal and accepted for people to tip differently, and you should not feel under any pressure to tip any particular amount.

We are often asked for advice on common amounts however, and suggest that up to approx. 5% of the tour price would be a suitable budget for this tour. More information will be provided in your pre-departure information.

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14 Health and Vaccinations

You should ensure you are fully insured for medical emergencies including emergency evacuation and repatriation.

Recommended vaccinations and other health protection measures vary according to the country you are visiting and where you are travelling from. We recommend you contact your GP/medical practitioner or a travel clinic for current information on vaccinations needed for your destination. You should ensure that you are up to date with vaccines and boosters recommended for your normal life at home, including for example, vaccines required for occupational risk of exposure, lifestyle risks and underlying medical conditions.

In addition, additional courses or boosters normally recommended for the countries in this region are: Hepatitis A and Tetanus. Malaria is not generally present unless it has been contracted abroad; you do not need to take malaria prophylactics. You are required to carry a Yellow Fever vaccination certificate if you are arriving from a destination with a Yellow Fever risk. You can view this US CDC information about where the virus is present and follow the links to further information detailing which countries need you to have a Yellow Fever vaccination as part of their entry requirements.

Personal health:

Sensible precautions should be taken to avoid sunburn and dehydration. On arrival and when travelling in the Maldives, we recommend that you stick to drinking bottled mineral water or to help the environment bring water purification tablets or a water filter and a re-usable bottle. Please ensure you have appropriate travel insurance, which includes health cover. If you require prescription medicines, please bring them with you, and include the

appropriate documentation.

There are two hospitals on the main island, Malé. The Indhira Gandhi Memorial Hospital is the biggest hospital in the country providing sophisticated medical care. Some resorts have in-house doctors. A decompression chamber is within easy reach of most resorts in case of emergency.

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15 Passports and Visas

No prior visa arrangements are required. Tourists are issued a 30-day visa on arrival. A passport valid for 6 months and travel documents (flight tickets) are necessary. You will need to present a landing card which should be distributed by the crew of your flight. Alternatively you can find cards immediately before the immigration booths. You will given back part of the landing card to present again when you leave, so please look after this and try not to lose it. To obtain immigration clearance it is a requirement to indicate on the landing card an address or provide proof that you have a booking at a resort, guest house or safari boat. We will provide the address of your initial Male accommodation on your tour confirmation voucher and it is important that you print a copy of this prior to arrival.

It is also a requirement that all passengers complete the online traveller declaration form IMUGA within 96 hours of your arrival into the Maldives.

Importing goods such as alcohol, pork items, pornography (very broadly defined), religious materials offensive to Islam, idols of worship, narcotics and psychotropic substances, explosives and weapons into the Maldives is strictly forbidden. Alcohol and pork products under a special license are available in resort islands. On the way out, note that exporting sand, turtle shells, seashells and a range of marine products is also forbidden unless you have bought them from a legitimate souvenir shop and can show the receipt.

All baggage including hand baggage is screened as part of the custom’s process before you leave the airports baggage collection area.

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16 When to Visit

You can visit the Maldives all year round, and be pretty sure of getting great weather. There are rains from time to time, but it is hard to predict exactly when they will come, and you'll be unlucky to get more than a couple of rainy days in succession.

Scuba diving is good all year round. Wind can obviously impact water based activities like sea kayaking and paddle boarding, and if this is the case we will aim to move these to a day later in the tour.

The winter season (December till April) is definitively not great for surfing. Generally it is also less windy, however, there is usually wind strong enough for trying sailing and even for windsurfing.

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17 Food, drink and alcohol

Maldivians, being Muslims, are prohibited by law from consuming alcohol; hence there is a total restriction on alcohol being available on inhabited local islands, this includes the capital Malé. Alcohol is available at Hulhule Island Hotel which is located at the airport. Arrangements to visit can be made through our local rep. We have tried

where possible to take this into account on our local island tours by providing opportunities to visit picnic islands and resorts where alcohol can be made available. However please bear in mind that is difficult to get hold of and even where alcohol is available, it is very expensive!

All tourist island resorts and safari yachts stock alcohol for guest consumption. Traditional beverages include “toddy” – aged coconut sap and plain coconut sap.

Please don’t bring alcohol through the airport as it will be confiscated.

The traditional food of the Maldivians is based around fish, (tuna to be more specific) and coconuts. White rice and “roshi” (a flour based flat-bread) are staple items. Fish is normally smoked, fired, barbequed or roasted. Pork products are strictly prohibited.

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18 Clothing & Climate

Visiting the Maldives is the chance for you to break out the brightly coloured summer clothes that are so often out of place in colder climates. The higher temperatures and ever-present sunshine means that locals and visitors alike prefer dressing in lightweight materials. T-shirts, cotton clothing, skirts and shorts would be the best option to stay cool. The ideal footwear would be sandals and flip-flops. Whether to pack only the more casual options like shorts and khakis or the newest Gucci number depends on what you plan to do, or where you plan to stay. Casual clothing is fine on the local islands and in guesthouses, smart casual clothing is usually enough for Malé or resorts, but the more up-market resorts may require that you dress up for dinner. Sunscreen, insect repellent, and hats are all necessary for a comfortable holiday, but they are available widely for purchase in resorts and around Malé.

With a tropical climate, plenty of sunshine and temperatures around 30°C throughout the year, there is never a bad time to visit the Maldives. Maldives has two distinct seasons; dry season (northeast monsoon) and wet season (southwest monsoon), with the former extending from January to March and the latter from mid-May to November. The rare thunderstorm in the Maldives (especially around the southwest monsoon months) can be a welcome respite from the sun. Cloudy skies and slate grey seas, and crashing thunder makes for lovely reading weather. The warm temperatures will allow you to go for a walk in the rain, a verdant, wet, thoroughly enjoyable experience. For extra exhilaration, take a swim in the rain - the sea will be extra warm.

There can be heavy rain showers pretty much any time of year, but they tend to be short and cannot be accurately predicted seasonally (in other words – don’t worry too much about them – you will quite possibly experience some rain showers, but the majority of the weather should be great, and you will be unlucky to get several consecutive days of heavy rain). Diving is good all year-round, although a basic rule is that reef life is more varied and visibility is better on the western side of any atoll from May to November and on the eastern side of any atoll from December to April.

The Maldives is a Muslim country and care needs to be taken in relation to the dress code on local islands. Whilst it is acceptable for men to wear T Shirts and shorts or swim shorts; females should avoid causing offence by maintaining a more conservative approach to clothes by wearing T Shirts, loose shorts or sarongs. Whilst the islands we visit are more tolerant of guests wearing traditional beachwear, females should avoid wearing bikinis and swimwear unless on an un-inhabited island, picnic island, sandbank, screened off local beach (Maafushi for example), dive boat or resort island. Whilst the law restricts the wearing of bikinis on local islands, some guesthouses (eg. Reveries Guest House on Gan Island) do provide a private sunbathing area on the beach or on the

terrace of the guesthouse, our local rep will advise when and where this is possible. It is common practice by both locals and visitors for females to swim from local beaches wearing a t-shirt and shorts. When visiting the home of a local family or during the island tours where we may have access to mosques and family homes, shoulders and thighs should be covered out of respect of local customs.

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19 What to take

The Maldives is a place where you don't require much in order to be comfortable. It is tropical, sunny and very relaxed, so you only really need to bring a few essentials:

- Valid Passport – with at least 6 months left before expiry.
- Light weight, casual, non-synthetic clothing (cottons and natural fibres are best) which appropriately cover the body, when in company of the local communities. (Please understand local customs and religious requirements relating to dress codes. It doesn't have to be fancy, but it needs to be respectful)
- Cool footwear (sandals are best). If you are interested in exploring the reefs, a pair of reef shoes is recommended to avoid injuries.
- Swimming costumes – rash-guards/t-shirts are recommended for snorkelling to avoid sunburn.
- Sunscreens, after sun lotions and personal hygiene products – Please adhere to 100ml restrictions for anything you wish to carry on hand-luggage on flights.
- Prescription medications (if required) – please bring supporting documents.
- Power adapter for phones, laptops etc – The Maldives uses mostly UK style sockets.
- Underwater camera – The Maldives below sea level is worth a few photos.
- Sunglasses and hats
- Dive certification card and log book if you intend to participate in SCUBA diving.

Luggage allowances:

Most international airlines restrict you to between 20kg and 23kg per person of luggage to go in the hold of the plane. Domestic flights often have smaller allowances around 15kg. As airline rules vary we recommend that you take no more than 20kg of luggage if your tour just includes international flights, and no more than 15kg if there are any domestic flights included in your itinerary. Please ask us for details if you are unsure about luggage allowances on your tour. Any excess baggage fees will be your responsibility to cover.

Most airlines allow between 5kg and 10kg for hand luggage so we suggest that you take no more than 5kg unless you have confirmed that your airline(s) will allow more than this.

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20 Money

The Maldives has a non-convertible currency – Maldivian Rufiyaa – this cannot be purchased beforehand. One Rufiyaa is 100 Laari and is available in 500, 100, 50, 20, 10 and 5 Rufiyaa notes.

One US Dollar is equivalent to 15.42 Rufiyaa. Major international currencies can be changed easily at the airport on arrival. It is advised not to exchange currency in Male where bank queues are common and waiting time lengthy. The US Dollar is accepted as legal tender. All major credit cards can be used (and are preferred) at resorts, hotels, shops, etc., however, on local islands it is usually only guesthouses that accept credit cards and cash is generally

preferred.

The national bank, Bank of Maldives has several branches in Male' as well as other major population hubs such as the Male' International Airport. Several other regional banks also operate in central city, Male', including the State Bank of India, Bank of Ceylon, and HSBC. There are no banks on resort islands or on local islands visited in our tours.

ATMs: Most banks represented in Malé provide automatic teller machine (ATM) services and credit card services at several key points in Malé and Hulhumale. Only local currency MRF will be dispensed. Whilst there is an ATM at the Male branch of the Bank of Maldives dispensing USD$, it only dispenses to Bank of Maldives cardholders. There are no ATMs on resort islands or on the local islands visited on our tours. All major credit cards can be used at resorts, hotels and many shops in Male. Most restaurants and shops in Male will accept USD$ in payment providing change in local currency.

Bank Notes: The banks in the Maldives are very particular about the condition of bank notes and will refuse deposits of old style US Dollars; any damaged notes, badly creased or well-worn notes will also be rejected. Therefore, if presenting such a note as form of payment you may be requested to change to a note of better condition. Please do not take offence, it is purely that the note will have no worth to the individual to whom you are paying. Also, note that small bills .i.e. $1 and $5 have a lower exchange value, as the Bank of Maldives charges for small notes to be deposited.

Spending money and budgeting: It is impossible to say exactly what you will need during your local island visit as this varies depending on personal preferences, the number of extra optional activities and souvenirs you may like to purchase. While on the local islands, approximate prices are as follows:

- Snack lunch: $5-$10
- Evening meal in guesthouse or local restaurant: $10-$20
- Tea / Coffee: $1
- Soft drinks: $1
- Water 500m: $1

You should expect prices on resort islands to be considerably more expensive than this.

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21 Voltage

Sockets are mostly three pronged (British style) and 220 volts, however some are European 2 pronged style. Adaptors are available in most airport shops if you don't have one. All electrical devices running on 110/120 V must have power converters / step-up transformers. All hotel rooms have electrical sockets where you can re-charge cameras, phones etc.

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22 Time

Maldives Standard Time is GMT/UTC + 5. Daylight saving time is not applied.

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23 Scuba Diving in the Maldives

The Maldives is rightly famous for the huge variety of different marine life you can see around the various islands, lagoons, coral reefs and shipwrecks. Much can be seen from the surface and just below on snorkelling trips. However, going scuba-diving opens up a whole new range of opportunities to see different species, corals and environments. There are many different types of dives available, from high coral walls, to shallow reefs, wrecks, lagoons and some decent shore dives.

You can scuba-dive all year round in the Maldives though during the rainier season of May to November the visibility can be poorer with stronger south westerley winds. Visibility tends to be best between December and April with lower wind speeds from the north east. The water temperature all year round averages a comfortable 28C. Currents are affected by both the tides and winds and can be unpredictable. It is important to listen to your diving guides carefully about this and take particular care if you are diving in an area where strong currents can be expected. The maximum depth allowed for leisure diving in the Maldives is 30m.

Virtually all islands have their own dive centre offering boat trips around that island as well as further afield.

If you are already a qualified diver you should ensure you bring along your log-book to prove your qualification and recent experience. We recommend also bringing your own mask and snorkel for comfort. You can bring further equipment as well but please check with your airline first for any excess baggage costs.

If you are a novice diver and have not got a PADI Open Water or equivalent (or higher) qualification, you can still enjoy scuba-diving in the Maldives and see a wealth of different fish and corals. All dive centres will offer a 'Discover Scuba' experience where you are introduced to the equipment and accompanied underwater one to one with a Dive Master or Instructor. You can do this at many different dive sites, though ones with strong currents will not be available.
