

Maldives Uncovered

Country(ies): Maldives

Tour type: Small Group

Transport: Minivan & local ferries or speedboats

Group size: Min: 2 | Max: 8

Days: 8 days

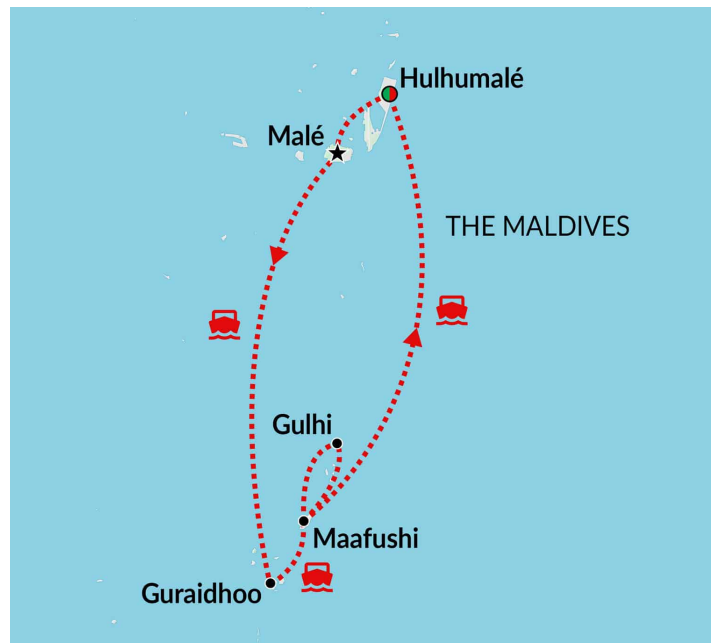
Start Location: Male, Maldives

End Location: Male, Maldives

Meals: Breakfasts - 7, Lunches - 1, Dinners - 5

Highlights:

Visits to 3 local islands in South Male Atol, boat trips, guided snorkelling over the coral reefs, visits to uninhabited islands & sand bars, beach barbecues, dining with local families, Hedika experience, scuba-diving options



Itinerary

Day 1: Arrive in Male, transfer to hotel

Upon arrival at Male International Airport you will be greeted by our representative and transferred by the airport shuttle taxi to your guesthouse on Hulhumale, just 15 minutes away. Settle in after your flight before taking your first steps on the sands of this tropical paradise. The beach is 3 min walk away, with several local cafes and local restaurants, plus a watersports centre. For guests arriving before 5.00pm there is an option to join your guide on the beach for coffee, a very popular daily activity for Maldivians and a chance to gain your first insight into the local side of this island paradise.

OVERNIGHT: Hulhumale guesthouse

MEALS: None

EXTRAS: Extra day in Hulhumale - pre-tour Single room supplement (MASHMM)

Day 2: Male Tour, ferry to Guraidhoo, free time & dinner

Following breakfast served at the guesthouse you will transfer by public ferry to Male, a 20-minute journey, where a guide will accompany you on a tour of the capital city, providing opportunity to visit places of interest including The Friday Mosque, The National Museum and Sultan Park.

After lunch transfer by local ferry (approx. 14.30) to your guesthouse on the local island of Guraidhoo, South Male Atoll, 120 minutes from Male. Sit up top on the ferry to view the beauty of the many Maldives islands that pass you by whilst keeping your eyes open for dolphins!

Upon arrival you will have time to settle in before either relaxing in the garden at the guesthouse or on the local beach to watch the sun go down. Dinner this evening is at your guesthouse before your guide will give some information on how the local marine life is under threat because of activities carried out by us humans. Your tour leader will highlight the harmful practices that are pushing the balance in the eco system and what we can do to limit the impact.

OVERNIGHT: Guraidhoo guesthouse

MEALS: Breakfast, Dinner

EXTRAS:

Day 3: Snorkelling trip. Guraidhoo discovery tour with Hedika experience.

Following a local style breakfast we travel by speedboat to two of the best nearby reefs. The coral reefs of the Maldives are inhabited by diverse marine life and are teeming with colourful fish and corals. Keep your eyes open for turtles, sharks and rays you never know what may be in the blue! Your tour leader will provide a briefing on responsible snorkeling and act as your 'spotter' pointing out marine life that may not have caught your eye.

Coral reefs are fragile ecosystems so learning how to snorkel responsibly can help minimize your impact on the marine environment and protect the delicate balance of marine life. They will assist less confident or inexperienced snorkelers, ensuring your equipment is comfortable and you feel safe in the water.

As the afternoon cools down accompanied by your tour leader time is spent exploring Guraidhoo with the opportunity to learn about the local way of life including a visit to the Mosque. Visit the harbour, maybe there will

be fishermen with their catch. Watch children playing in the street. Discover local fruit trees as you wander the narrow maze of sandy roads. Finally, stop by a local cafe to sample traditional 'hedika' - Maldivian savoury and sweet short eats served with black tea.

OVERNIGHT: Guraidhoo guesthouse

MEALS: Breakfast, Dinner

EXTRAS:

Day 4: Ferry to Maafushi. Visit Renee's Coral Garden and the Oliver Ridley Project

Kick off your day with an early start and take a local ferry to the charming island of Maafushi, a quick 20-minute journey. Once you've checked into your guesthouse, settle in for a relaxed breakfast. Afterwards, you'll have time to explore the island, getting to grips with its layout and discovering the best spots for lunch or a refreshing juice with a view. Your tour leader will be on hand to delve into the history of local island tourism, discussing both its positive and negative impacts on the islands and their communities.

This afternoon, your tour leader will guide you through the fascinating story of Renee's Coral Garden, explaining the vital importance of coral rehabilitation projects in the Maldives. On the way to the coral rehabilitation site, you'll have the chance to snorkel the seagrass beds with your guide. You'll learn about their crucial role in the Maldives ecosystem; despite being one of the planet's most valuable ecosystems, seagrass is often considered unsightly and is frequently removed. Your tour leader will help you understand why seagrass is considered the "hero of underwater protection."

After dinner at a local café, your tour leader will introduce you to the inspiring work of the Olive Ridley Project. They'll provide insight into their environmental monitoring and turtle studies, preparing you for an exciting day of turtle snorkelling tomorrow!

OVERNIGHT: Maafushi guesthouse

MEALS: Breakfast, Dinner

EXTRAS: Full-day scuba-diving boat trip from Maafushi Half-day scuba-diving boat trip from Maafushi Manta Ray boat trip from Maafushi

Day 5: Turtle Snorkelling Experience. Visit a deserted sandbank. Tree Planting

After breakfast, we'll head back out onto the ocean for an unforgettable turtle snorkelling experience. This reef is a turtle paradise, thanks to its abundance of soft corals – essentially an all-you-can-eat buffet for them! Before you dive in, your tour leader will go over the turtle snorkelling code of conduct to ensure a respectful and memorable encounter for both you and the turtles.

Next, we'll make a stop at an idyllic sandbank just a short distance from Maafushi. These Maldivian sandbanks are truly a natural wonder, showcasing the breathtaking beauty of this tropical paradise. Imagine a pristine stretch of glistening white sand emerging from crystal-clear turquoise waters, forming a tiny, isolated island in the middle of the Indian Ocean. Here, you'll have the chance to swim, snorkel, or simply relax and soak up the sun. A picnic lunch will be served on this picturesque spot.

On our return journey to Maafushi, we'll cruise through the Indian Ocean, keeping a keen eye out for dolphins. Your tour leader and the crew, who are familiar with the habits and behaviour of these graceful creatures, will be on the lookout. They'll share fascinating stories about the different dolphin species found in the region, their social dynamics, and their vital role in the ecosystem. It's an educational and enriching experience that will deepen your

appreciation for these incredible marine creatures.

Upon our return to Maafushi, we'll engage in a meaningful activity: planting a coconut palm for each guest and your tour leader, leaving a positive impact on the island.

OVERNIGHT: Maafushi guesthouse

MEALS: Breakfast, Lunch

EXTRAS:

Day 6: Visit Gulhi for a change of pace and beach clean

After an early breakfast on day six, we'll take a short speedboat trip to the quiet local island of Gulhi. Once checked into your guesthouse, your guide will take you on a tour of the island. We'll visit the boat yard to marvel at the size of the boats under renovation, chat with the local women sweeping the streets, and finally refresh ourselves with a cool Kurumba (coconut).

While we enjoy our refreshments, your tour leader will discuss how plastic waste is managed in the Maldives and the work being done by Parley for the Oceans. We all know the impact of plastic in our daily lives; it's become a huge part of modern living. The Maldives is no different and faces a significant challenge in dealing with daily waste, particularly plastic.

For relaxation, you can choose to head to the bikini beach, or, if you're feeling more energetic, join your tour leader for a snorkelling session on Gulhi's house reef. As the afternoon cools down, you can spend time on the beach, giving back to the community that has welcomed us by participating in a beach clean. Our reward will be a refreshing swim in the ocean!

OVERNIGHT: Gulhi guesthouse

MEALS: Breakfast, Dinner

EXTRAS:

Day 7: Free day for relaxation or optional activities

Today is a free day! Relax on the bikini beach, or, for those feeling more active, participate in the various optional watersports available.

This evening's dinner will be prepared by a local family. Don't expect silver service, as meals are traditionally eaten without cutlery!

OVERNIGHT: Gulhi guesthouse

MEALS: Breakfast, Dinner

EXTRAS:

Day 8: Transfer to Male airport for departure

After breakfast you are transferred back to Male by public ferry (approx. 07.30), across town, and on to Male airport where the tour ends. You should expect to arrive at the airport by around 10.30am. If you have a flight departing earlier than 1pm then we recommend taking an earlier speedboat transfer from Gulhi to the airport (at extra cost). If you have a late afternoon or evening flight departure and understandably do not want to spend a

long time waiting at the airport, then day-use rooms are available at the Newtown Inn (price includes an airport departure transfer to meet your flight).

Alternatively, you can take an unassisted speedboat transfer from Gulhi to the airport (at extra cost). There are also day package options at Hulhule Airport hotel to use the swimming pool, restaurant, bar etc. or an optional half day visit to Vilimale island which is 15 minutes from Male. Other snorkelling trips or other watersport activities are also available.

Those travellers booking a resort extension will transfer from Male airport on to their resort via the resort's own transfer boat. Our guide will assist you with meeting this transfer though there may be a short wait depending on the resort boat's schedule.

OVERNIGHT: N/A

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS: 4-night Gulhi Island Extension 4-night Dhoni cruise extension Extra day in Hulhumale - pre-tour
Speedboat departure transfer Day-use room & airport transfers in Hulhumale Extra day in Hulhumale - post-tour

Included:

- 7 nights accommodation: 1 night Hulhumale, 2 nights Guraidhoo, 2 nights Maafushi, 2 nights Gulhi
- All transport and transfers
- 24-hour airport arrival transfer service
- Meals as indicated in the itinerary
- Free 30-day tourist visa on arrival to all nationalities
- Local guide throughout
- Large selection of included activities and experiences
- Sustainable Tourism initiatives

Excluded:

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

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.

Single room supplement (MASHMM)

Min numbers: 1

This tour is based on twin-share accommodation, with single bookers paired up with another traveller of the same sex in the group. If the final group make-up means that no room share is available, you do not need to pay this supplement. However, if you would like to guarantee yourself a single room throughout the tour, then please add this option to your booking.

Note: Single supplement prices may vary seasonally.

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.

4-night Barefoot Eco Resort Extension

Min numbers: 1

The Barefoot Eco Hotel & Villas is nestled in the preserved deep North of the Maldives, on the charming local island of Hanimaadhoo in the Haa Dhaalu Atoll.

To reach the resort, you'll enjoy an aerial view of the Indian Ocean's turquoise waters on a 45-minute domestic flight from Malé International Airport.

The four-star resort is immersed in untouched nature, offering you not only privacy but also the chance to discover the true Maldives. A private, half-mile sandy beach and 64 comfortable rooms, along with four Heritage villas, frame the hotel, inviting you to experience an authentic and relaxing holiday at outstanding value.

Extension pricing includes four nights' accommodation, daily breakfast, and return domestic flights. Please note that pricing is based on two people sharing, and single supplements apply.

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. Tour Leaders/Guides

We provide a fully trained local guide to escort you throughout this tour. Tour guiding in the Maldives is a fairly new concept but our guides are keen, friendly, speak good English, and are delighted to be able to provide tourists with a different experience of the Maldives to the normal resort island holiday. A range of boat crews are also used for the various water-based activities. A permanent rep is based in Hulhumalé to assist at the start and finish of the tour.

At Encounters Travel we aim to only use local tour guides as we feel this gives you the best experience of the country and the sites you are seeing as well as supporting the local population.

3. International Flights

We want to give you as much flexibility as possible when it comes to booking your holiday with us. So, to take account of people with varying travel plans, we don't include your international flights in the main tour price. We are however very happy to book your flights for you, and our ATOL (UK flight sales license) covers all holidays booked together with a flight from the UK.

Please contact us with your preferred dates and departure airport and we'll give you a selection of airlines, times and fares to choose from. Your airport arrival & departure transfers are included on the first and last days of the tour whether you book your flights independently or through us.

On our local island tours we generally finish with a transfer by local ferry from your island back to Male and on to the main airport island on the last day of the tour. If your international flight departs before around 1pm you will require a speedboat transfer to the airport at extra cost – see the Options section for details.

Some resort islands may require an extra sea-plane transfer to be taken if you have an early departure flight from Malé. This will also be at an extra cost - please ask for details.

4. Dates & Prices

We run limited small-group departures on this tour, normally starting on a Saturday. Departure dates and prices are listed on our website and in our brochures. Please check the website for the most up-to-date prices and any special offers available.

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Note: Please [download an up-to-date copy](#) of these tour notes shortly before you travel as itineraries and information does change from time to time.
