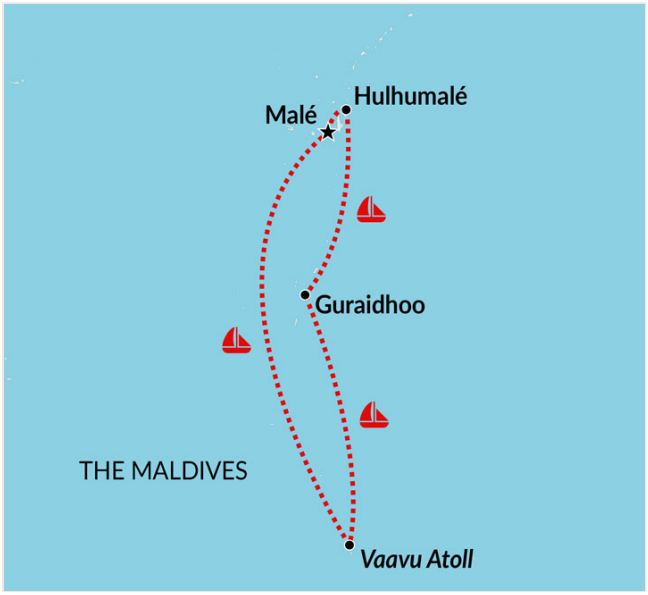
Marine Conservation Cruise

COUNTRY(IES)	Maldives
TOUR TYPE	Small Group
TRANSPORT	A/C car & S/Y Felicity safari boat
GROUP SIZE	Min: 6 | Max: 12
DURATION	8 days
STARTS	Male, Maldives
ENDS	Male, Maldives
MEALS	Breakfasts - 7, Lunches - 7, Dinners - 7

TOUR ROUTE MAP **8 Days**



ROUTE: **Male** (Start) → **Maafushi** → **Dhigurah** → **Rangali** → **Male** (End)

HIGHLIGHTS

Snorkel with whale sharks, assist in marine research, visit coral nurseries, explore local islands, learn about seagrass, join beach clean-ups, experience Maldivian culture, and cruise on MV Felicity.

Itinerary

DAY 1 **Arrival transfer, board your conservation cruise**

This arrival experience introduces the journey from the Maldivian capital to the local island of Maafushi, combining travel with an early focus on marine awareness. Arrival at Malé Airport is followed by boarding MV Felicity, where you settle in before departing the harbour. The boat journey to Maafushi provides the first transition from the capital to island life. On board, a snorkelling briefing prepares you for upcoming marine activities in the surrounding reefs. The evening concludes with a presentation by Save the Beach, introducing coastal conservation efforts and setting an environmental context for the days ahead.

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.
- **Board MV Felicity and Settle In**
  You board the MV Felicity and settle into your cabin before departure while your guide introduces the vessel and outlines the coming days.
- **Boat from Male to Maafushi**
  The MV Felicity sails from the Male area toward Maafushi in South Malé Atoll, giving you your first taste of life on board.
- **On-Board Snorkelling Briefing**
  Your tour leader gives a safety and skills briefing on responsible snorkelling, helping minimise your impact on delicate reef ecosystems.
- **Evening Talk by Save the Beach**
  Local NGO Save the Beach presents the importance of coral reefs, the threats they face, and how conservation projects in the Maldives help protect them.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS	EXTRAS
Cabin on board the Felicity	Lunch,Dinner	Extra day in Hulhumale - pre-tour, Single room supplement (MASGMU)

DAY 2 Coral Restoration & Seagrass Exploration

This experience focuses on Maafushi’s marine conservation efforts and the surrounding shallow-water ecosystems. A visit to the coral rehabilitation site introduces ongoing reef restoration work and the methods used to support coral recovery. Snorkelling over nearby seagrass beds reveals an important marine habitat that supports fish, turtles, and overall reef health. The combination of observation and in-water exploration highlights the interconnected nature of reef and seagrass environments. Together, the activities provide a deeper understanding of how local conservation initiatives protect Maafushi’s coastal ecosystems.

ACTIVITIES

- **Explore Maafushi Coral Rehabilitation Site**
  You visit a coral rehabilitation site near Maafushi to see how coral fragments are grown and transplanted, showcasing practical reef restoration.
- **Snorkelling at Seagrass Beds**
  You snorkel over seagrass meadows and learn how these overlooked habitats store carbon, shelter marine life, and stabilise coastlines.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Cabin on board the Felicity	Breakfast,Lunch,Dinner

DAY 3 South Ari Atoll Exploration

This experience explores the rich marine environments of South Ari Atoll while connecting with local island life and conservation research. A cruise into the atoll sets the stage for snorkelling in waters known for their biodiversity and clear visibility. Time in the ocean is complemented by a visit to Dhangethi Island, where a hedika experience offers insight into everyday Maldivian food culture. The day concludes with a whale shark research talk led by the Maldives Whale Shark Research Programme, providing scientific context to the region’s marine life. Together, the journey blends reef exploration, community interaction, and conservation awareness.

ACTIVITIES

- **Sail to South Ari Atoll**
  The cruise continues toward South Ari Atoll, renowned for its rich marine life, with time to relax on deck and watch for dolphins and seabirds.
- **Snorkelling Session in South Ari Atoll**
  You enjoy a snorkelling session over colourful South Ari reefs, comparing coral health and fish life with previous sites.
- **Explore Dhangethi Island for Hedika Experience**
  In the late afternoon you visit Dhangethi, sampling traditional Maldivian hedika snacks and experiencing daily life on a local island.
- **MWSRP Whale Shark Research Talk**
  The Maldives Whale Shark Research Programme team explains whale shark behaviour, identification and the code of conduct for tomorrow's encounters.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Cabin on board the Felicity	Breakfast,Lunch,Dinner

DAY 4 Whale Shark Safari and Island Exploration

The programme includes a whale shark safari, research-related data capture, an uninhabited-island beach clean-up and an evening presentation on whale shark biology. Wildlife sightings remain dependent on natural conditions and cannot be guaranteed. The source names the Maldives Whale Shark Research Programme but does not specify the exact data collected, so no technical research procedures should be invented.

ACTIVITIES

- **Whale Shark Safari in Dhigurah Region**
  You search by boat along the reefs near Dhigurah for whale sharks, entering the water only when conditions allow ethical, low-impact encounters.
- **Assist MWSRP with Whale Shark Data Capture**
  You help record size, markings and behaviour of any whale sharks sighted, contributing directly to long-term research and monitoring.

- **Visit Uninhabited Island and Beach Clean-Up**
  You land on an uninhabited island to relax, explore and take part in a beach clean-up, removing plastic waste from the shoreline.
- **Evening Whale Shark Biology Talk**
  That evening the MWSRP team shares more about whale shark ecology and conservation challenges, deepening your understanding of these gentle giants.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Cabin on board the Felicity	Breakfast,Lunch,Dinner

DAY 5 Central Ari Atoll, Uninhabited Island and beach clean up

The day includes a boat trip to Rangali Madivaru, a whale shark search with a research-related data session and a forest walk on Dhigurah. Manta rays, whale sharks and other marine species are wild, so sightings depend on ocean conditions. Returning to the island for the forest walk creates a clear contrast with the earlier time spent on the water.

ACTIVITIES

- **Sail to Rangali Madivaru - Manta Point**
  The boat cruises to Rangali Madivaru, known as Manta Point, where an early snorkel may reward you with manta ray sightings if conditions are right.
- **Whale Shark Safari and Data Session**
  You continue monitoring for whale sharks, practising identification skills and reinforcing your role as a citizen scientist.
- **Walk Through Dhigurah Forest**
  In the late afternoon you walk through Dhigurah's tropical vegetation, learning how island flora supports biodiversity and protects shorelines.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Cabin on board the Felicity	Breakfast,Lunch,Dinner

DAY 6 Cruise to Malé, Snorkelling, and Gulhi Island

This experience follows a northbound journey through the Maldives, combining marine exploration, island life, and traditional culture. A cruise toward Malé includes snorkelling stops along the way, offering final opportunities to explore reef environments before returning to the capital region. A visit to Gulhi Island provides insight into local island life and community rhythms. As evening falls, a Maldivian theme night brings cultural traditions to the forefront. A Bodu Beru performance concludes the day, showcasing music and dance rooted in the country’s heritage.

ACTIVITIES

- **Sail Towards Malé with Snorkelling Stops**
  The MV Felicity begins the return journey toward the Male area with two snorkel stops, each revealing different coral structures and reef species.
- **Explore Gulhi Island**
  You visit the quiet fishing island of Gulhi, see boats in the dry dock boatyard, chat with locals and cool off with fresh kurumba coconut.
- **Maldivian Theme Night and Bodu Beru Performance**
  Back on board, a Maldivian theme night with Bodu Beru drumming and dancing showcases traditional music and island culture.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Cabin on board the Felicity	Breakfast,Lunch,Dinner

DAY 7 Final Snorkel and Conservation Insights

This experience brings the Maldives journey to a thoughtful close, combining final time in the water with community-led environmental insight. A last snorkelling session offers one more opportunity to explore the surrounding reefs and observe marine life in clear, shallow waters. The visit to Villimalé introduces a local island perspective close to the capital. Engagement with Save the Beach highlights grassroots efforts focused on coastal protection and sustainability. Together, the activities reflect a closing chapter that balances marine appreciation with environmental awareness.

ACTIVITIES

- **Final Snorkelling Experience**
  You enjoy a final snorkel, with chances to see turtles, rays or reef sharks as a last farewell to the Maldives' underwater world.
- **Explore Villimalé in Save the BeachExplore Villimalé in Save the Beach**
  On Villimalé you meet Save the Beach again and see how coastal development and urban pressures affect reefs and conservation projects.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Cabin on board the Felicity	Breakfast,Lunch,Dinner

DAY 8 Departure transfer to airport

This transfer provides a straightforward and organised journey to Malé International Airport in preparation for departure. The movement from accommodation or harbour areas to the airport marks the final logistical step of the Maldives itinerary. It allows time to transition from island or coastal settings to international travel arrangements. The focus is on efficiency and smooth coordination. The experience concludes the journey in a calm and practical manner.

ACTIVITIES

- **Transfer: Male International Airport**
  After disembarking the MV Felicity, an included transfer takes you to Male International Airport in time for your onward flight.
- **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	Extra day in Hulhumale - post-tour, 4-night Gulhi Island Extension

INCLUDED

- 7 nights accommodation on board a boat such as the Felicity, a Turkish style sailing boat with AC cabins, fully-equipped bathrooms, TV / DVD / music library, sun decks
- All transport and transfers
- 24-hour airport arrival & departure transfer service
- Meals: 7 breakfasts, 7 lunches and 7 dinners
- Unlimited drinking water (bring a reusable bottle)
- Snorkeling activities
- Local Island Tours
- Hedika Experience
- Cultural Dinner
- Dingy or dhoni transfer to snorkeling points and islands
- Music and movies library
- Free 30-day tourist visa on arrival to all nationalities
- Local guides & boat crew
- Accommpanied by the Maldives Whale Shark Research

EXCLUDED

- International flights (available on request)
- Travel insurance (compulsory, get a quote here)
- Meals not indicated in the itinerary
- Alcoholic Beverages (from $4 payable at the end of the cruise)
- Diving (available on request)
- Drinks, snacks, tips and other personal expenses (e.g. laundry)
- Any other items not mentioned above

Notes

> Note: The day by day itinerary may be subject to change according to local weather conditions.

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.

Single room supplement (MASGMU)

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.

Important Notes

1 Accommodation

For this cruise, you'll be travelling onboard the M/V Felicity, a Turkish gulet featuring 4 double cabins and 3 twin cabins - all air-conditioned - with en-suite bathrooms. With plenty of space for sunbathing and taking in the gorgeous Maldives scenery from the sun-deck, M/V Felicity will be your base for the duration of the trip.

Single passengers will be paired with another traveller of the same gender (or placed in a cabin for sole use, depending on the final group makeup).

A range of mid-level and luxurious island resort stays are available as extensions at the end of the tour.

2 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 whether you book your flights independently or through us.

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

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.

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3 Tour Leaders/Guides

For our Marine Conservation Cruise, you'll be joined onboard by members of the MWSRP, the Maldives Whale Shark Research Program, who will provide expert information relating to the Whale Shark population of the Maldives. A member of our local team will also travel onboard with you, to ensure everything runs to plan.

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.

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4 Dates & Prices

We run limited small-group departures on this tour. 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. The boat is also available to charter privately if required - prices on request.

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5 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.

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6 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.

7 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).

8 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')

9 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.

10 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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11 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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12 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.

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13 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.

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14 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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15 Entrance Fees

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

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16 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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17 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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18 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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19 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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20 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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21 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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22 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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23 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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24 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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25 Time

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

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26 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.
