

island Spotlight

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear Readers,

Welcome to this exciting edition of Island Spotlight, your ultimate gateway to the vibrant intersections of tourism and business. Each page of this magazine is a celebration of the unique charm, entrepreneurial spirit, and cultural richness that define the joys of island living. In this issue, we invite you to join us as we explore hidden tourism gems that beckon with their unspoiled beauty, spotlight innovative businesses driving growth and shaping the local economy, and delve into the opportunities and challenges within the island tourism and hospitality industries.

This edition of Island Spotlight will also place a special focus on the remarkable young talent emerging in the tourism and hospitality sector. While we continue to cover the diverse aspects of island business and tourism, we are excited to shine a spotlight on the next generation of innovators, entrepreneurs, and leaders who are shaping the future of island tourism. Their fresh perspectives and innovative approaches are not only transforming the tourism and hospitality sectors but also enriching the local cultures and economies of islands around Maldives.

Our mission is to bring you stories that reflect the true essence of island life while offering fresh perspectives to elevate and enrich your own journey. Whether it's discovering off-the-beaten-path destinations, connecting with visionary entrepreneurs, or uncovering the trends that are shaping island tourism, we're here to spark your curiosity and imagination.

As always, we're incredibly grateful for your readership, your enthusiasm, and the shared passion for the experiences that make island life so extraordinary. It is a privilege to be part of your world, and we hope these pages inspire you to discover, connect, and thrive. Thank you for letting Island Spotlight accompany you on your journey of inspiration and discovery.

Warm regards,

Fathuhulla Yameen Saeed
Editorial Director, Island Spotlight

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MALDIVES LAUNCHES MAJOR GLOBAL GIVEAWAY CAMPAIGN FOR 2025

52 Free Holidays Await as Part of Year-Long Social Media Contest Series



On January 1, 2025, Visit Maldives launched its largest global campaign, the "World's Biggest Giveaway," offering 52 free holidays—one per week throughout the year. Announced at WTM London in November 2024, this initiative aims to enhance the Maldives' global reputation as a top travel destination.

Monthly contests on Visit Maldives' social media will award four winners exclusive vacations, highlighting the country's luxury, adventure, and culture. The campaign also seeks to boost tourism by engaging global audiences, increasing bookings, and strengthening industry partnerships through strategic marketing efforts.

The Maldives is also collaborating with travel influencers, media outlets, and industry leaders to amplify its message, positioning the destination as perfect for honeymooners, adventure seekers, wellness enthusiasts, and families alike. This initiative is set to increase the country's appeal and contribute to its growing status as a leading global travel hotspot.

MANTA AIR EXPANDS FLEET TO FUEL GROWTH IN 2025



Manta Air is set for a transformative 2025 with the addition of new DHC-6 Twin Otter seaplanes, featuring advanced avionics to enhance efficiency and passenger experience. These new planes will improve connectivity across the Maldives, expanding the airline's reach. Manta Air plans further fleet growth, continuing its rapid expansion and commitment to premium air travel. Since its launch in 2019, Manta Air has grown to serve over 35 resorts and remains focused on innovation, customer satisfaction, and sustainable growth in the tourism sector. The airline aims to offer even more seamless travel experiences for both locals and tourists.



MMPRC SHOWCASES MALDIVES' DIVERSE TRAVEL EXPERIENCES AT FITUR 2025

The Maldives Marketing and Public Relations Corporation (MMPRC) kicked off 2025 by showcasing the Maldives at Fitur 2025, a prominent international travel trade event held in Madrid from January 22nd to 26th. MMPRC, joined by 25 industry partners, is using the event to promote the Maldives as a leading travel destination in Spain and Europe. Fitur serves as an ideal platform to highlight the Maldives' diverse offerings, including romantic getaways, wellness retreats, adventure holidays, and family vacations, all while showcasing the country's unique cultural experiences. The Maldives' stand features interactive activities such as local food tastings, calligraphy bookmark creations, and photo opportunities with traditional Maldivian props, all designed to engage attendees and immerse them in the Maldives' vibrant culture. Captivating visuals and videos on LED screens offer attendees a virtual tour of the country's pristine beaches, turquoise waters, and luxurious resorts, bringing the destination to life.

This participation is particularly significant as Spain was one of the top 10 markets for tourist arrivals to the Maldives in 2024, with 47,835 visitors. MMPRC aims to build on this momentum, further enhancing the Maldives' visibility and attracting even more Spanish tourists through engaging activities at Fitur. The event reflects MMPRC's ongoing commitment to promoting the Maldives as a diverse, top-tier destination for international travelers, with a special focus on attracting European markets and enhancing bilateral tourism relationships.



MALDIVIAN A330 BOOSTS ECONOMIC & TOURISM TIES WITH CHINA

Maldivian Airline contributing highly to China-Maldives Relations.

Maldivian, the national airline of the Maldives, has taken a significant step in strengthening economic and tourism ties with China by launching direct flights to key Chinese cities. With the introduction of its first wide-body aircraft, the Airbus A330-200, Maldivian has not only expanded its fleet but also broadened its international reach, enhancing connectivity between the two nations.

China has historically been one of the Maldives' largest and most important tourism markets, and the resumption of direct flights is expected to drive a substantial and steady surge in visitor arrivals. The new routes to Beijing, Shanghai, and Chengdu offer greatly improved accessibility, making it far easier and more convenient for Chinese travelers to explore the Maldives' world-renowned island resorts, which are already a major draw for international tourists from all over the world. These direct flights are expected to significantly cut travel time and offer a seamless experience for travelers, enhancing the Maldives' appeal as a top destination.

On January 23, 2025, Maldivian's Airbus A330-200 completed its inaugural flight from Chengdu to Malé, carrying 192 passengers and 10 tonnes of cargo. Among the passengers, 172 were tourists, which highlights the strong and growing demand for direct connectivity between China and the Maldives. This inaugural flight demonstrated the robust potential of this new route, offering great promise for future travel between the two nations.

Following the Chengdu launch, Maldivian commenced its direct service to Beijing. The inaugural flight carried a mix of passengers, including a number of Chinese tourists returning home, marking a highly successful entry into the Chinese capital. The first passenger to check in for this flight received a special welcome, underscoring the airline's unwavering commitment to providing exceptional service and hospitality for its customers. The flight then returned to Velana International Airport with 252 tourists from China, reinforcing the strong demand and interest in the Maldives as a destination for Chinese travelers.

The inaugural flight to Shanghai is scheduled for January 27, 2025. While specific passenger numbers for this flight are not yet available, the airline anticipates strong demand based on the impressive success of the previous launches. With these three major Chinese cities now directly linked to the Maldives, Maldivian expects a continuous and steady increase in the number of tourists from China, further enhancing the Maldives' position as a must-visit destination in the Indian Ocean.





Combining the available data, Maldivian's inaugural flights to Chengdu and Beijing have collectively transported a significant number of tourists, further bolstering the Maldives' tourism sector. The upcoming Shanghai flight is expected to add to this positive trend, reinforcing the Maldives' growing reputation as a preferred destination for travelers from China. These routes are crucial to the Maldives' broader strategy of attracting more visitors from Asia and beyond, creating a solid foundation for the country's tourism industry to thrive.

The Airbus A330-200 utilized for these routes features a three-class configuration, accommodating 264 passengers across business, premium economy, and economy classes, offering a range of travel options for various budgets and preferences. Maldivian has also announced plans to introduce another Airbus A330 later this year to expand its route network, which will include direct flights to select European cities, further broadening the airline's international offerings and deepening its global reach.

These developments underscore Maldivian's strategic commitment to enhancing international connectivity, strengthening tourism ties with key markets such as China, and supporting the growth of the Maldives' economy through improved aviation infrastructure and services. The airline's expansion into new markets represents a key component of the nation's efforts to maintain and accelerate its economic growth.

In addition to boosting tourism, as of January 29, 2025, a total of 200,241 visitors had arrived in the Maldives, with China leading the market by contributing 31,388 tourists, accounting for 15.7% of the total arrivals. This highlights the crucial and ever-growing role China plays in the Maldives' tourism industry, and the new flight routes are expected to amplify this further. Beyond tourism, the enhanced connectivity is also set to significantly boost trade and investment opportunities, facilitating business engagements, attracting Chinese investments in the Maldivian economy, and promoting cultural exchanges between the two nations.

As the Maldives strengthens its global presence, Maldivian's expansion plays a key role in supporting economic growth, creating jobs, and fostering closer ties with China, all while ensuring sustainable development for the island nation.

STAY COMFORTABLY AT THE G TEN HOLIDAY INN



The G Ten Holiday Inn in Hulhumale is an ideal choice for travelers seeking a comfortable and convenient place to stay during their visit. Offering rooms for daily rent, this hotel caters to the needs of both short-term visitors and those planning extended stays, providing flexibility for all types of travelers. Its prime location, directly in front of the popular Asiana Restaurant, ensures guests have easy access to a variety of delicious Asian and international dishes, making dining options both accessible and enjoyable.

The rooms at The G Ten Holiday Inn are thoughtfully equipped with all the essentials to ensure a comfortable and hassle-free stay. Featuring cozy beds, modern

amenities, and well-designed interiors, the hotel offers a peaceful and relaxing retreat after a day spent exploring Hulhumale or nearby Male. Whether you're returning from the island's serene beaches, browsing the vibrant local markets, or experiencing the nearby attractions, the accommodations provide the perfect place to unwind.

With its affordable rates, comfortable accommodations, and central location, The G Ten Holiday Inn stands out as a perfect choice for those visiting Hulhumale. Its combination of convenience, hospitality, and value makes it an excellent base for exploring the island and enjoying all that the area has to offer.

MAAFARU AIRPORT ACHIEVES RECORD PRIVATE JET MOVEMENTS IN 2024

Runway Expansion and Enhanced Services Strengthen Maldives' Luxury Tourism Appeal



Maafaru International Airport, managed by Island Aviation Services Limited, experienced impressive growth throughout 2024, even despite the temporary closure from June to September for significant runway expansion. December saw a notable 98 private jet movements, further solidifying the airport's status as a luxurious gateway to the Maldives.

With the completion of the runway expansion, the airport has significantly enhanced its service capabilities, positioning Maafaru as a leading and premier aviation hub in the region. General Manager Mumthaz Ali emphasized the ongoing improvements, including enhancements to ground transportation infrastructure and upgrades to the apron, all of which form part of a broader transformation plan aimed at elevating the airport's overall capacity and service quality.

Meanwhile, Maldivian, the national airline of the Maldives, continues to strengthen its connectivity efforts. With a modern fleet of 25 aircraft, the airline serves 16 domestic airports and key international routes. In addition, its seaplane services further ensure seamless travel across the nation, further reinforcing the Maldives' well-established reputation as a top-tier global destination for luxury and leisure.

OOREDOO'S 2025 CALENDAR BRINGS MALDIVIAN FOLKLORE TO THE DIGITAL AGE

Combining AI and NFC Technology, the Calendar Preserves Heritage Through Interactive Storytelling

Ooredoo Maldives has unveiled its highly anticipated 2025 calendar, titled "Future Meets Nostalgia," which creatively blends Maldivian folklore with cutting-edge technology. The calendar was launched at Ooredoo's Hulhumalé headquarters and officially inaugurated by Minister Ali Ihusan. This unique calendar is the first of its kind in the Maldives, integrating advanced NFC technology and AI-driven chatbots to offer an interactive experience.

Each month introduces a different folklore character, drawn from cherished Maldivian tales such as Foolhudhigu Handi and Safaru Kaiydha, allowing users to engage with the characters and explore their stories in a digital format. Chief Commercial Officer Hussain Niyaz emphasized that this initiative not only brings Maldivian culture to life but also plays a crucial role in preserving it, making the stories accessible and engaging for future generations.

This innovative project aligns perfectly with Ooredoo's vision for a Digital Maldives. By leveraging modern technology, Ooredoo is taking significant strides toward safeguarding and sharing the rich cultural heritage of the Maldives in creative and forward-thinking ways, ensuring that the nation's traditions remain relevant and preserved for years to come.



OOREDOO MALDIVES DRIVING INNOVATION & DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION ACROSS THE NATION

Since its inception in August 2005, Ooredoo Maldives has been at the forefront of the country's telecommunications and digital services industry. Originally launched as Wataniya Telecom Maldives, the company has been an integral part of transforming the digital landscape in the Maldives. As a member of the Ooredoo Group, which spans the Middle East, North Africa, and Southeast Asia, Ooredoo Maldives has consistently driven innovation and redefined telecom services, providing customers with world-class connectivity and technology.

A commitment to innovation has been central to Ooredoo Maldives' success. The company has continuously invested in cutting-edge technologies to improve its mobile, broadband, and corporate managed services. The expansion of its 4G and 5G networks has significantly enhanced connectivity across the country, particularly in remote areas. By deploying new network sites and improving infrastructure, Ooredoo has extended its SuperNet broadband service to an additional 15 islands, bringing its total coverage to 73 islands and covering over 63% of households in the Maldives.

Ooredoo Maldives' Digital Maldives strategy aims to enrich digital lives by prioritizing self-service capabilities. By empowering customers to manage their accounts and access services at their convenience, the company is reducing reliance on traditional service channels. This focus on digitalization not only strengthens Ooredoo's telecom services but also plays a pivotal role in transforming other industries, setting a high standard for service delivery across the nation.

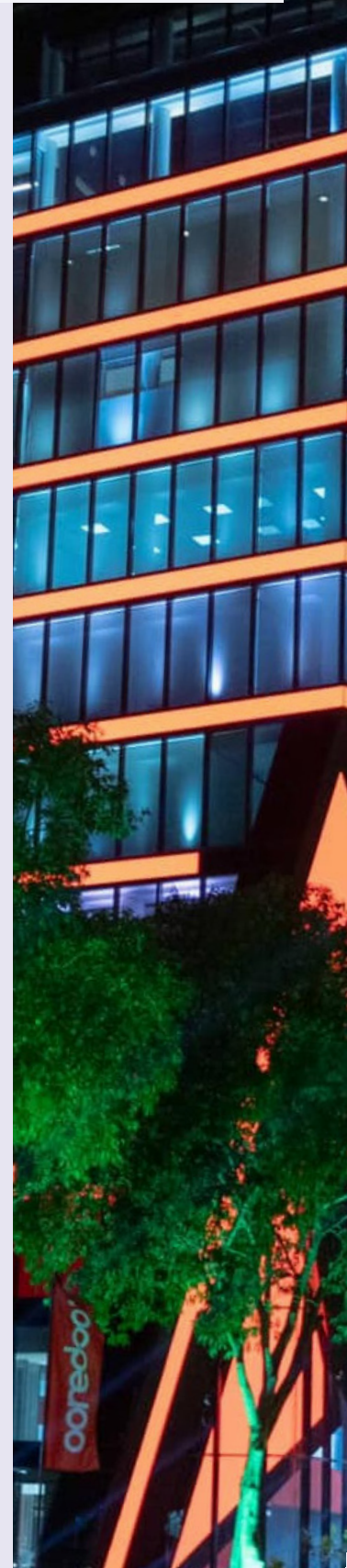
In addition to its technological advancements, Ooredoo Maldives has demonstrated agility in adapting to changes in the market. The company's

ability to respond quickly to emerging trends has allowed it to stay ahead of technological shifts, ensuring its offerings remain aligned with customer needs. Through strategic units that embrace agile methodologies, Ooredoo has fostered a work environment conducive to innovation and creativity, driving its continued success.

At the core of Ooredoo's operations is a commitment to delivering an exceptional customer experience. The company's customer-first approach is exemplified through initiatives such as Customer Day, where leadership personally engages with customers to gain insights into their experiences. This direct interaction allows Ooredoo to continually refine and improve its services, further enhancing customer satisfaction. The company's network reliability is another cornerstone of its success, ensuring seamless connectivity, even in remote areas. Notably, Ooredoo launched AirFibre, the first 5G-powered home broadband service in the Maldives, and became the first to launch a commercial 5G network in the country, covering key areas including Malé, business hubs, hospitals, and public spaces.

A significant milestone in Ooredoo Maldives' digital strategy came in 2024 with the arrival of the PEACE Cable, a major international submarine cable that connects the Maldives directly to Singapore and Europe. This cable, which landed in Kulhudhuffushi City, enhances the country's global connectivity, supporting the digital transformation of businesses and communities. It also opens up opportunities for further growth in hyperscalers and managed services, contributing to job creation and skills development in the digital economy.

Ooredoo Maldives has also invested in infrastructure, launching a Tier-3 ready





Data Center in Hulhumale in 2021. This state-of-the-art facility provides businesses across the Maldives with the reliable IT infrastructure necessary for seamless digital transformation. As the first Tier-3 ready data center in the country, it plays a crucial role in supporting the growth of local businesses, especially in the government, corporate, and hospitality sectors.

The company's Digital Islands Initiative further extends its impact, with the transformation of N. Landhoo into the Maldives' first Digital Island. This initiative integrates Ooredoo's digital services, such as the SuperApp, m-Faisaa digital wallet, and Moolee e-commerce platform, to facilitate smoother financial transactions and promote digital literacy. By creating a digitally inclusive society, Ooredoo Maldives is leading the charge in fostering a digital-first mindset across the nation.

Ooredoo's SuperApp, launched in 2019, has been a game-changer in the digital landscape. The first app of its kind in the world, it integrates telecom services, financial services, and e-commerce into a single platform, offering users a convenient and comprehensive digital experience. With over 160,000 active monthly users, the SuperApp has become a key component of Ooredoo Maldives' digital strategy, making it easier for customers to access various services, from mobile recharges to online shopping.

Additionally, the launch of Moolee, Ooredoo's e-commerce marketplace, reflects the company's commitment to accelerating digital transformation. Moolee leverages artificial intelligence to simplify online shopping, enabling both businesses and consumers to access the goods and services they need, further solidifying Ooredoo Maldives as a key driver of digital growth.

Beyond technological advancements, Ooredoo Maldives is committed to corporate social responsibility (CSR) and contributing positively to society. The company has donated MVR 16 million to the government, supported health kit donations, and promoted digital literacy through various initiatives. In line with its sustainability efforts, Ooredoo Maldives has pledged to plant 20,000 trees by 2025 under its "Grow with Ooredoo" initiative, further promoting environmental responsibility.

Ooredoo's "Israhvehinnai Eku Ooredoo" campaign honors senior citizens by providing them with access to technology and organizing intergenerational activities, reinforcing its dedication to community engagement. These efforts highlight Ooredoo Maldives' commitment to improving lives, fostering sustainable growth, and making a positive impact on society.

Ooredoo Maldives' ongoing success is a direct result of its focus on customer satisfaction, technological innovation, and social responsibility. With its extensive network, cutting-edge services, and commitment to digital transformation, Ooredoo Maldives is playing a pivotal role in shaping the future of telecommunications in the country. Through its forward-thinking approach, the company is driving digital growth and contributing to the broader digital economy, ensuring that the Maldives is well-positioned to thrive in the digital era.

WAMCO LAUNCHES PILOT PROJECT FOR RESORT WASTE DISPOSAL SERVICES

Government Initiative Aims to Improve Environmental Sustainability Across Atolls



Minister of Climate Change, Environment, and Energy, Thoriq Ibrahim, has announced that the Waste Management Corporation Limited (WAMCO) will be rolling out a pilot project to offer waste disposal services to resorts. The project is set to begin this month and will focus on three specific atolls: Raa Atoll, Baa Atoll, and Lhaviyani Atoll.

During a press conference, Minister Thoriq addressed the ongoing issue of improper waste disposal practices at some resorts, where waste is either discarded into the ocean or not transported to proper waste transfer stations. This issue has raised concerns among island councils, who have expressed their worries about the environmental damage caused by these practices. The waste management issues have led to an increase in pollution, negatively impacting the local ecosystems, wildlife, and marine life that depend on the pristine conditions of the Maldives.

In response to these challenges, the Ministry of Climate Change, Environment, and Energy has partnered with WAMCO and local resort operators to create a solution. The pilot project will implement responsible waste management strategies at the

participating resorts, with hopes of expanding the initiative based on the success of the trial. Resorts will be encouraged to adopt more sustainable practices, including reducing waste generation, recycling, and improving waste segregation at the source.

Minister Thoriq made it clear that should the pilot project prove effective, the ministry would take necessary actions against resorts that continue to violate waste management regulations. Authorities will monitor compliance closely to ensure resorts meet the required standards, with potential penalties for those that fail to cooperate.

The minister highlighted that this initiative reflects the government's strong commitment to promoting environmental sustainability and implementing better waste management practices. He also noted that, upon successful completion of the pilot project, the program could be expanded to additional resorts across the nation. This would mark a significant step toward ensuring that all resorts in the country manage their waste responsibly, contributing to the preservation of the environment for future generations.

**Bringing Stories to Life
Through Stunning Visuals
and Emotional Narratives in
the Heart of the Maldives**

YAAMEEN WAHEED THE ART OF ISLAND PHOTOGRAPHY



In the breathtaking landscapes of the Maldives, where endless blue skies meet shimmering waters, one photographer has mastered the art of capturing stories through his lens. Yamin Waheed has spent more than a decade turning moments into timeless imagery, building a name for himself in the Maldivian tourism industry.

Yamin’s journey began on his home island, where his passion for photography first took root. What started as a personal project—capturing the daily lives of those around him—soon evolved into a career that placed him at the heart of the country’s top luxury resorts. Driven by curiosity and a relentless pursuit of creative expression, Yamin quickly became a sought-after photographer known for his expertise in lifestyle, romance, and portrait photography.

Today, Yamin operates two successful studios in different resorts across the Maldives, offering guests a chance to take home more than just photographs—they take home memories frozen in time. His work caters to couples celebrating their love, families enjoying unforgettable holidays, and individuals seeking to see themselves in a new light, all set against the backdrop of the world’s most beautiful islands.

For Yamin, photography is a never-ending journey of exploration. Constantly on the lookout for new ideas, cutting-edge gear, and creative props, he continues to refine his craft and push boundaries. His passion lies in expressive storytelling, creating images that invite viewers to think beyond the surface and explore every frame from fresh perspectives.

“My goal is to make people feel something when they look at my photographs,” Yamin shares. “I want them to step into the story and find their own meaning in it.”

His ability to capture raw emotion and blend it with the natural beauty of the Maldives has made him an essential figure in the tourism industry. In a place where experiences are treasured, Yamin’s photography does more than document—it preserves, transports, and inspires.

As he continues to grow his brand and explore new creative possibilities, Yamin remains dedicated to his craft, leaving a lasting impression on Maldivian photography, one frame at a time.

DISCOVER THE ULTIMATE ISLAND GETAWAY AT HERON BEACH DHIFFUSHI

Your Ideal Island Getaway with Beautiful Beaches, Delicious Food, and Exciting Adventures

Located on the serene island of Dhiffushi in the Maldives, Heron Beach Dhiffushi is the perfect getaway for travelers seeking a harmonious blend of relaxation and adventure. This charming guesthouse offers a tranquil retreat just steps away from the beach, with breathtaking ocean views, soft sandy shores, and the soothing sound of waves creating the perfect backdrop for your stay.

The rooms at Heron Beach Dhiffushi are designed with comfort and convenience in mind, featuring modern amenities, plush furnishings, and tasteful interiors to ensure guests feel completely at ease. Whether you're traveling solo, as a couple, or with family, the accommodations cater to all needs, offering a welcoming and relaxing atmosphere that makes every moment of your stay unforgettable.

For food enthusiasts, the dining experience at Heron Beach Dhiffushi is nothing short of exceptional. The guesthouse prides itself on serving delicious meals that highlight fresh, local Maldivian flavors alongside international favorites. From a hearty breakfast by the beach to an elegant dinner under the stars, every meal is crafted to delight the senses and make your island getaway even more special. Guests can enjoy an array of freshly prepared seafood dishes, tropical fruits, and refreshing beverages that showcase the island's culinary richness.

What truly sets Heron Beach Dhiffushi apart is its extensive range of thrilling excursions, designed to immerse guests in the natural beauty and vibrant marine life of the Maldives. Adventure seekers can swim alongside turtles at Turtle Point, marvel at the colorful marine life in the coral reefs of Nemo Garden, or watch playful dolphins leaping through the waves at Dolphin Point. For those seeking tranquility, a visit to a secluded sandbank or the mesmerizing Coral Garden offers serene escapes like no other.





Guests with a sense of adventure can explore even more unique experiences, including snorkeling with nurse sharks, spotting stingrays, or diving into the captivating Shark Point. Night snorkeling reveals an entirely different side of the ocean, with glowing bioluminescent wonders illuminating the water under the starry sky. Fishing enthusiasts can also enjoy the thrill of both traditional and big-game fishing trips, while a resort day visit allows you to indulge in luxury, including access to exclusive pools, spas, and fine dining at nearby properties.

Beyond the excursions, the island itself is a treasure trove of natural beauty and cultural charm. Visitors can take leisurely walks through the village, interact with the friendly locals, and discover the laid-back lifestyle that defines Dhiffushi. The island's stunning beaches are perfect for unwinding, while the warm turquoise waters invite you to swim, paddleboard, or simply float and take in the breathtaking surroundings. The natural rhythms of island life create a sense of peace and harmony that enhances every aspect of the experience.

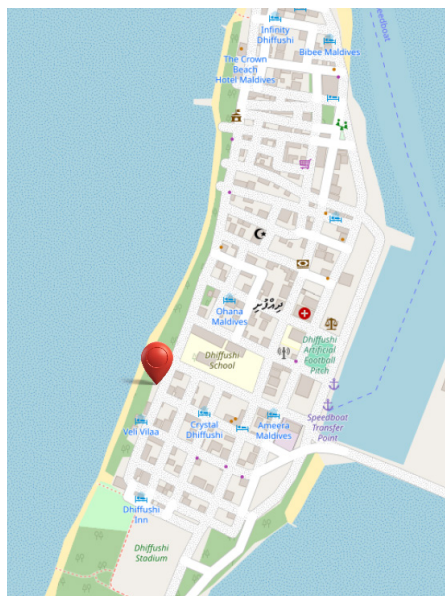
The exceptional hospitality at Heron Beach Dhiffushi ensures that every guest feels welcome and cared for. The attentive staff is dedicated to creating an unforgettable experience, whether it's arranging excursions, serving up delicious meals, or offering helpful tips for exploring Dhiffushi Island and beyond.

Heron Beach Dhiffushi combines its idyllic beachfront location, comfortable accommodations, and warm hospitality to create a truly memorable island experience. Whether you're looking to relax and soak up the sun, savor exquisite cuisine, or dive headfirst into the wonders of the Maldives' marine world, this guesthouse offers the ultimate escape.

Don't miss the chance to experience the beauty and magic of Dhiffushi. Book your stay at Heron Beach Dhiffushi today and discover why it's the perfect destination for your Maldivian adventure.



PLAN YOUR STAY AT HERON BEACH DHIFFUSHI



K. Saleemee Hingun, Dhiffushi

 7777277

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SONEVA FUSHI SPARKS GLOBAL DIALOGUE ON CORAL REGENERATION

From January 9 to 12, 2025, Soneva Fushi hosted an event in the Baa Atoll UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, bringing together marine scientists, conservationists, and finance experts to address coral reef degradation. Co-led by Professor Callum Roberts and Karen Sack, the summit focused on climate change's impact on coral ecosystems and proposed financial models like blue bonds to scale up restoration efforts. The dialogue ended with a joint declaration urging immediate action to protect tropical coral reefs.

The event emphasized the need for a shift towards regeneration-focused restoration, combining local projects and global ocean management strategies. Dr. Johanna Leonhardt shared progress in coral restoration at Soneva Fushi, including spawning labs and nurseries. Despite the loss of coral cover, the declaration highlighted the importance of innovative solutions and financial commitment to ensuring coral reef survival. Participants agreed on the urgent need for public-private collaborations and increased community engagement to foster long-term resilience. Looking ahead, the summit laid the groundwork for future partnerships and research to accelerate global coral conservation.



SAMANA DEVELOPERS LAUNCHES \$598 MILLION LUXURY PROJECT

Elie Saab Interiors to Design Exclusive Villas and Bungalows at Samana Ocean Views, Set for Completion in 2029

Samana Developers has announced its \$598 million luxury project, Samana Ocean Views, in the Maldives, marking its entry into the branded residences sector. The development will feature 190 exclusive units, including beachfront villas, overwater bungalows, and poolside apartments, designed by Elie Saab Interiors. Set to be completed by 2029, it will offer top-tier amenities such as a spa, wellness center, restaurants, and sustainable initiatives like coral restoration.

With over 1,000 units already delivered, Samana Developers brings its expertise to the Maldives, blending luxury and sustainability to create a unique living experience. Elie Saab Jr. praised the project as a key addition to the group's global portfolio, setting a new standard for luxury living in the region. The development is expected to attract high-net-worth individuals seeking an unmatched combination of elegance and eco-conscious design, further elevating the Maldives as a premier destination for luxury real estate.

NEW PLECTRANTHIAS SPECIES DISCOVERED IN THE MALDIVES' DEEP REEFS



A new species of Plectranthias perchlet, *Plectranthias raki* sp. nov., has been discovered in the mesophotic coral ecosystems of the Maldives, deepening our understanding of deep-reef biodiversity. Found at depths of 100–125 meters, the species features unique morphological traits, such as a dorsal fin with 10 spines and 15 soft rays, an anal fin with three spines and seven rays, and striking coloration with a white to light pink body, golden-yellow markings, and red-orange to yellow-orange patches.

Specimens were collected using hand nets during rebreather dives and analyzed through morphological measurements and DNA sequencing. The holotype is housed at the California Academy of Sciences, and the discovery highlights the need for further exploration of mesophotic coral ecosystems, especially in the understudied Indian Ocean, which may harbor even more undiscovered species. This finding underscores the importance of protecting deep-reef habitats, which are increasingly threatened by climate change and human activity. Continued research and international collaboration are crucial for unveiling the hidden diversity in these depths and guiding conservation efforts.



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EMBRACING ECO-TOURISM: A PATH TO PRESERVATION

Eco-friendly Practices and Conservation
Efforts Defining Island Life



The Maldives, a serene archipelago in the Indian Ocean, has long captivated travelers with its pristine beaches, crystal-clear waters, and vibrant coral reefs. Known for its stunning natural beauty, the country offers an idyllic escape for beach lovers, divers, and nature enthusiasts alike. However, beneath its picturesque exterior lies an urgent and growing environmental crisis that threatens the very foundation of its allure. As one of the world's lowest-lying island nations, the Maldives faces grave challenges such as rising sea levels and plastic pollution, both of which jeopardize its fragile ecosystems and unique way of life. For the Maldives, sustainability is not just an ideal, but an urgent necessity, critical to its survival.

A Nation Committed to Eco-Tourism and Environmental Stewardship

In response to these growing environmental threats, the Maldives has wholeheartedly embraced eco-tourism as a sustainable alternative to traditional mass tourism. Eco-tourism prioritizes responsible travel that minimizes environmental impacts, ensuring that the nation's rich natural resources are preserved for future generations. Over the years, the Maldivian government, along with the hospitality industry, has worked tirelessly to implement eco-friendly policies that address these issues, helping transform the nation into a leader in sustainable tourism practices. Resorts across the islands have incorporated green initiatives that range from eliminating single-use plastics to the use of solar power and wind energy. These efforts reduce carbon footprints and protect local biodiversity, ensuring that tourism can coexist with the environment rather than contribute to its degradation.

Engaging Tourists in Conservation Efforts

Eco-tourism in the Maldives goes beyond just adopting green technologies and practices. The Maldives has actively involved visitors in conservation efforts, encouraging them to take part in a variety of activities that contribute to the islands' environmental protection. Tourists are invited to engage in beach clean-ups, where they can directly participate in reducing plastic waste and preserving the marine environment. Additionally, many resorts now offer immersive experiences that educate guests on the importance of protecting coral reefs and marine ecosystems. These initiatives provide travelers with a deeper understanding of the delicate balance of the local environment, fostering a sense of stewardship and encouraging them to make sustainable choices during their visit. By supporting sustainable fishing practices, tourists help promote the preservation of local marine life, ensuring that future generations will be able to enjoy the same vibrant underwater ecosystems.

Traditional Practices Supporting Sustainability

While the Maldives has adopted modern sustainability practices, the nation's deep-rooted connection to its natural environment can be traced back to its traditional ways of life. Fishing, for instance, has been the backbone of the Maldivian economy and culture for centuries. Traditional methods such as pole-and-line fishing, a centuries-old technique used to catch tuna, have long been central to the Maldives' approach to sustainable fishing. This method, which involves using a single fishing pole and line to catch individual fish, reduces the risk of overfishing and helps maintain the health of the ocean's ecosystem. By preventing the capture of non-target species and avoiding the use of harmful fishing equipment like trawl nets, this practice safeguards the marine life around the islands, ensuring that coral reefs remain healthy and resilient.

In addition to traditional fishing practices, the Maldivian government has taken several significant steps to protect the nation's marine environment. The establishment of marine protected areas has become a cornerstone of conservation efforts, helping to preserve coral reefs and important habitats for fish and other marine species. These protected zones restrict harmful human activities, allowing ecosystems to thrive undisturbed. Laws have also been put in place to prohibit destructive fishing methods and to regulate tourism activities to prevent damage to the delicate coral reefs. These protective measures, combined with the country's commitment to eco-tourism, form a holistic approach to environmental stewardship that serves as a model for other nations facing similar challenges.

A Lifestyle of Sustainability for Future Generations

The Maldives' approach to sustainability goes beyond just conservation; it represents a lifestyle deeply rooted in respect for nature and the understanding that the survival of the islands is inextricably linked to the health of the environment. In this small island nation, sustainability is woven into every aspect of daily life, from the food people eat to the ways they interact with the land and sea. It is a lifestyle that embraces harmony with the natural world and seeks to minimize human impact on the environment. For the Maldivian people, this connection to the land is not merely a cultural tradition, but a fundamental part of their identity and way of life.

As the Maldives continues to face environmental challenges, the need for sustainable practices has become more critical than ever. Through the widespread adoption of eco-tourism, responsible fishing practices, and government-led conservation initiatives, the nation is not only addressing these challenges but also setting a powerful example for other island nations and global communities. By balancing tourism, tradition, and environmental protection, the Maldives is showing the world that it is possible to protect the environment while still supporting economic growth and cultural heritage.

Tourists as Partners in Environmental Protection

For tourists, the Maldives offers an exceptional opportunity to become active participants in the preservation of one of the world's most stunning ecosystems. Visitors are encouraged to support eco-friendly resorts that prioritize sustainability, choosing accommodations that utilize renewable energy, minimize waste, and contribute to conservation efforts. By making thoughtful choices during their trip, travelers can help reduce the negative impacts of tourism on the environment and contribute to the ongoing protection of the Maldives' fragile ecosystem. Respecting local environmental practices, such as avoiding the use of plastic and supporting sustainable local businesses, further strengthens the collective effort to preserve the beauty of the islands for future generations.

Ultimately, the future of the Maldives hinges on the lifestyle choices made today. Through conscious living, responsible tourism, and sustainable practices, it is possible to ensure that the nation's natural wonders remain intact for years to come. As a global leader in eco-tourism and environmental conservation, the Maldives exemplifies how even the most vulnerable nations can overcome environmental challenges and set a new standard for sustainable development. By working together—residents, businesses, and tourists alike—there is hope that this tropical paradise can thrive for generations to come, serving as a lasting testament to the power of collective responsibility and sustainable living.

The Maldives' unwavering commitment to eco-tourism and sustainability is more than just a strategy—it is a philosophy that celebrates conscious living, environmental protection, and the preservation of a unique way of life. In a world where environmental concerns are ever more urgent, the Maldives offers hope and inspiration, showing how an entire nation can rise to meet the challenges of the future while safeguarding its natural beauty.

MALDIVES WELCOMES OVER 193,000 TOURISTS IN JANUARY 2025, WITH CHINA LEADING ARRIVALS

Strong Start to 2025 Highlights the Maldives' Continued Tourism Growth and Global Appeal

The Maldives has kicked off 2025 with an impressive boost in tourism, recording 193,175 tourist arrivals by January 28. This represents a 10.7% increase compared to the same period in 2024, signaling continued growth and resilience in the country's vital tourism sector. The daily average arrivals in January 2025 reached 6,899 visitors, highlighting strong and consistent demand for this world-renowned travel destination.

China emerged as the leading market in January 2025, contributing 29,397 visitors—reflecting a remarkable resurgence in Chinese tourism. This surge coincides with the Chinese New Year celebrations, which traditionally mark a peak travel period for Chinese nationals. Russia and Italy followed as the second and third largest markets, with 20,291 (10.5%) and 18,779 (9.7%) arrivals, respectively. The UK (17,084 visitors) and Germany (11,189 visitors) rounded out the top five, further emphasizing the Maldives' broad appeal across Europe.

Tourists visiting the Maldives in January 2025 were primarily accommodated in resorts, which welcomed 134,714 visitors. However, there was also a notable increase in the popularity of guesthouses, which hosted 49,203 tourists, reflecting a growing demand for more affordable and locally immersive experiences. Hotels received 4,716 visitors, while safari vessels hosted 4,467.

These trends demonstrate the Maldives' success in offering a wider range of tourism products, catering to both luxury travelers and those seeking unique, budget-friendly options.

The Ministry of Tourism noted a significant milestone on January 25, which saw the highest single-day arrivals of 9,199 tourists. This surge in visitor numbers aligns with the Maldives' ambitious goal of generating US\$5 billion in tourism revenue for 2025.



The impressive growth in arrivals reflects the effectiveness of the Maldives' strategic initiatives to recover from the global pandemic and expand its tourism offerings. By continuously enhancing infrastructure and promoting the country across key markets, the Maldives remains well-positioned for sustained success.

Looking ahead, the Maldives is set to build on this strong start to 2025 with additional efforts to diversify its tourism portfolio. New investments in wellness tourism, adventure travel, and eco-friendly resorts aim to attract a broader audience, particularly eco-conscious and experience-driven travelers.

The country's ability to attract visitors from such a wide range of international markets ensures that it will continue to thrive as a top global destination. With strategic investments and innovative tourism products, the Maldives is poised for sustainable growth, further boosting the economy and solidifying its place as a leader in the global travel industry.

SARAH MATHEWS JOINS VISIT MALDIVES AS A DIGITAL STRATEGY CONSULTANT

Sarah Mathews, a digital marketing expert with over 30 years of experience, has been appointed as a consultant for the Maldives Marketing and Public Relations Corporation (Visit Maldives). Known for her work with top global brands such as Tesla, Coca-Cola, and Japan Airlines, she brings extensive expertise in data-driven marketing, digital transformation, and global branding. Sarah spent a decade at Tripadvisor, where she spearheaded impactful marketing strategies across the Asia Pacific region, helping to shape the region’s travel landscape.

A passionate advocate for diversity, equity, and sustainable tourism, she made history as the youngest female chair of the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) and remains dedicated to promoting responsible travel practices. Her appointment at Visit Maldives is expected to drive innovation in the destination’s brand strategy while strengthening its global visibility. Sarah will also help establish a new Technical Committee aimed at launching industry-focused initiatives and fostering collaboration. With her wealth of experience, Visit Maldives hopes to embrace fresh perspectives and accelerate its efforts in building a more resilient and competitive tourism industry.



NEW AIRPORTS AND UPGRADES WILL EXPAND THE AVIATION NETWORK

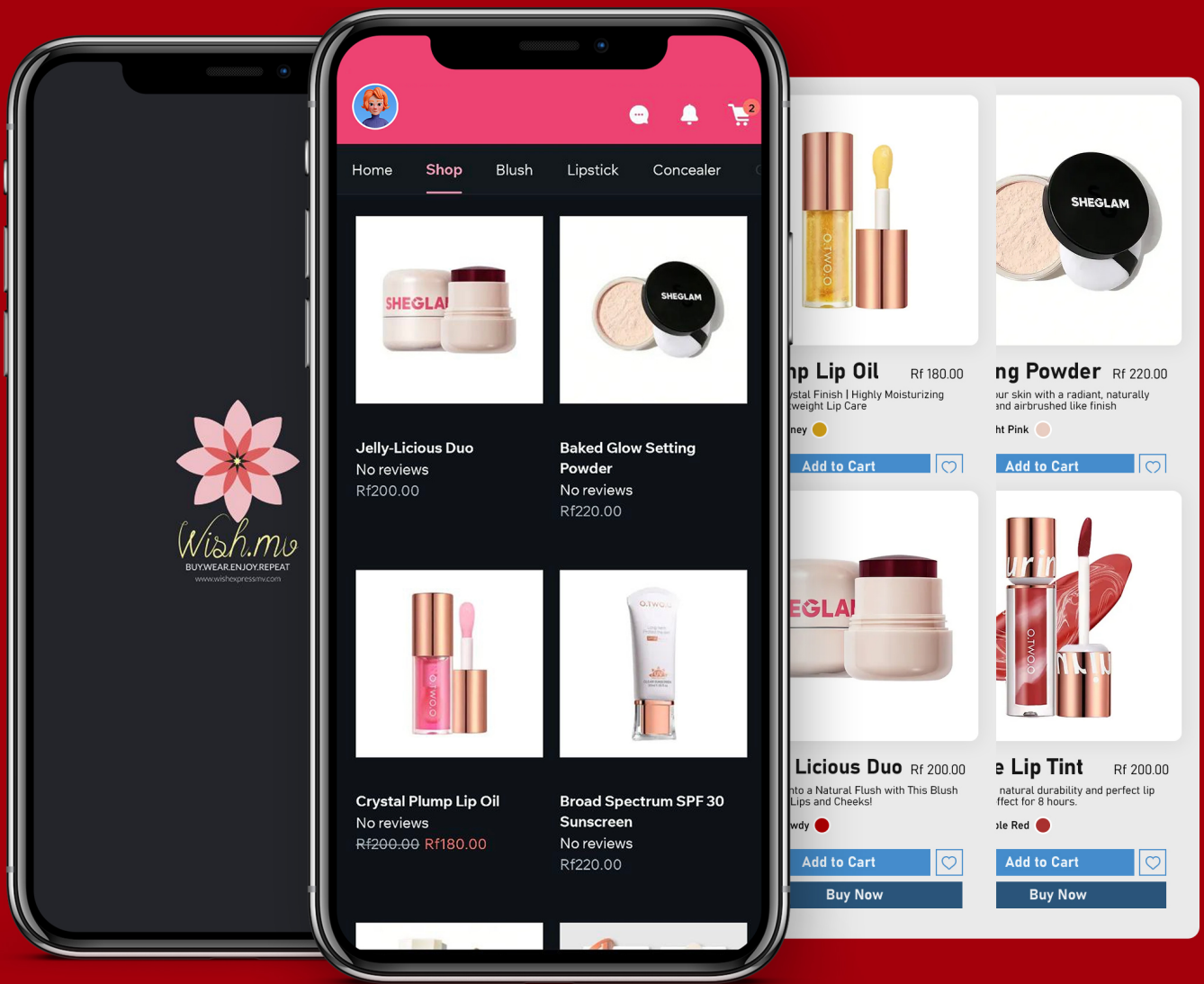


The Maldives is poised to expand its aviation network with several key projects designed to enhance connectivity and drive tourism growth. Muli Airport in Meemu Atoll is set for completion by February 2025, improving access to the central atolls. Hanimaadhoo International Airport’s expansion will be fully operational by July 2025, featuring a new terminal with modern facilities such as VIP lounges and a dedicated sea terminal for seaplanes and ferries. Meanwhile, construction is progressing on a new airport at Fainu Island in Raa Atoll, aimed at further improving regional access and supporting nearby resorts.

Additionally, the government has announced plans to build an international airport in Southern Huvadho Atoll, which will provide a critical gateway to the southernmost parts of the country. These ambitious projects reflect the Maldives’ commitment to enhancing its aviation infrastructure and ensuring seamless connections for both regional and international travelers. By improving air connectivity, the Maldives aims to attract more visitors, boost local economies, and strengthen its position as a leading global travel destination.

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