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## **Magnificent Maldives**

A favourite superyacht destination

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# Magnificent Maldives

*The magnificent Maldives is becoming a real contender as one of the world's favourite superyacht destinations as the country opens up and superyachts stream in from around the globe.*

**By Linda Carlidge**









**T**he Republic of the Maldives is remotely located in the middle of the Indian Ocean and is known as one of the world's most beautiful archipelagos. The country is a fast-growing yachting destination for those looking to enjoy a magnificent climate, gorgeous beaches (some say the best in the world) and astonishing coves and lagoons. Blessed with extensive live reefs housing incredible marine life, the archipelago groups of atolls were naturally formed from layers of coral, generally rising no more than 6 metres above sea level.

The global superyacht community has been

spreading the word as to the many Maldivian delights that await vessels stopping off on their way to the Far East. The Maldives' multiple coral islets and indigo seas provide fantastic cruising options in weather which is generally picture perfect with sunny days, breezy nights, balmy mornings and iridescent sunsets. The Maldives also offers an endless patchwork of incredible snorkelling and dive sites, with a fantasy world of marine life and living reefs just a short swim from the beach or your yacht.

#### Endless seascapes

The Maldives is made up of 1,192 coral

islands formed around 26 natural ring-like atolls spread over 90,000 square kilometres with sandy beaches and an abundance of fish that swim happily in the warm waters of a dream destination full of character. The islands were first discovered along the trading routes of the Indian Ocean. Settlers and visitors from neighbouring regions and around the world came stopped at the islands, and the to-and-fro flow of people and cultures has left its mark in the language, beliefs, arts and attitudes of the local people. In fact, the appearance of the Maldivians, attributed to the genes passed on by South and Southeast



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THE MALDIVES ALSO OFFERS AN ENDLESS PATCHWORK OF INCREDIBLE SNORKELLING AND DIVE SITES

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### Maldives Superyacht Visitors

M/y Alandess; M/y Ambrosia; M/y Amnesia; M/y Anna; M/y Antarctica; M/y Capella C; M/y Crystal Lady; M/y Golden Odyssey; M/y Golden Shadow; M/y Horizons; M/y Ilona; M/y Itasca; M/y Legacy; M/y Meduse; M/y Michaela Rose; M/y Octopus; M/y Pasha; M/y Q.M of London; M/y Samax; M/y Serenity; M/y Shandor; M/y Sinbad; M/y Slipstream; M/y Sunrays; M/y Teleost; M/y Tigadore; M/y Valkyrie. Among the Sailing Yachts are: S/y Alithia; S/y Anekona; S/y Diamonds Forever; S/y Enterprise; S/y Foftein; S/y Grandbleu; S/y Mystery; S/y Onra; S/y Perseus and S/y Squall.

Asians, Africans and Arabians, may differ from one atoll to the other. The islands' capital, Malé covers an area of approximately one square mile hosting a population of more than 100,000 people. Catering to the growing interest and number of superyachts streaming in from around the globe, Asia Pacific Superyachts agency there handles more than 95% of large yachts that call in to the Maldives. "In the beautiful island nation of the Maldives you can find the true splendour of nature everywhere," says APSY general manager Mohamed Hameed. "Cruising yacht guests can spot countless species of

sea birds and thriving coral reefs hosting an endless variety of exotic fish and marine life, protected by sanctuaries."

#### Custom cruises

A custom itinerary for an arriving superyacht in Maldives will generally include options for high-end resort visits to enjoy special attractions and indulge in luxury wining and dining. Among an extensive number of luxury resorts is the new Dusit Thani Maldives on Mudhdhoo Island. Opened in July of 2011, the resort is fast becoming well known for frequent sightings of dolphins and sea turtles.

The resort's 'living house reef' is a snorkeller's paradise; ideal for discovering an underwater world just metres from the beach. The entire operation is geared toward achieving a carbon-neutral programme and it is one of the leaders in sustainable resort development in the Maldives. Many of the Maldives' resorts have designed and implemented structures to support the live coral reefs due to dire warnings of future destruction.

Among major changes being implemented to support conservation and preservation efforts is the change in diving regulations at Hanifar Bay at Baa Atoll under the

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“Hanifaru Management Plan” of the Baa Atoll Conservation Program (as of January 2012). A popular international dive location, the change at Hanifaru Bay from diving and snorkelling to ‘only snorkelling’ was made to minimise the potentially negative impact from divers on the manta rays and whale sharks that visit annually between May and December to feed on the plankton-rich blooms. Diving is still permitted on the outer area of Hanifaru Bay and the rest of Baa Atoll. The change also brought about the coveted distinction of the

entire area being declared a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve.

The country’s recent visa changes are beneficial to visiting yachts, as well as tourists. “Although the duration of the stay allowed in Maldives for yachts and other tourist vessels remains the same,” says Mohamed Hameed, “a critical change is that every tourist receives a 30 day visa on arrival and the visa can be extended for another 60 days. A cruise license may then be obtained by owners or their agent from the Ministry of Tourism and Civil

Aviation. All other regulations are fairly flexible and special permissions can be given by the ministry depending on the situation.”

These changes and regulations will enhance the Maldives yachting future and are in line with the country’s efforts to share the stunning beauty and appeal of the region whilst also protecting the marine life for future generations. The goal is to conserve all biological and natural resources and also to improve the lives of local residents with research, awareness and education. Visiting



superyachts will find the new regulations and conservation measures simply make the Maldives that much better.

Asia Pacific Superyachts Maldives Pvt Ltd is a member of the Association of Yacht Support Services (AYSS) and offer visiting Superyachts a complete list of agency services detailed at the APS website at [www.asia-pacific-superyachts.com/aps-maldives](http://www.asia-pacific-superyachts.com/aps-maldives) [mohammed@asia-pacific-superyachts.com](mailto:mohammed@asia-pacific-superyachts.com) ■

## Sample Itinerary (designed by Mohamed Hameed and Arif Abdul Samad of Asia Pacific Superyachts Maldives)

### Day 1: Kuda Bandos

Situated in Malé Atoll near Bandos Island Resort, Kuda Bandos is a breathtaking island a shout away from the main island of Bandos. The island of Kuda Bandos is ideal for a private picnic on the beach or merely enjoying the sunset after a full day of snorkelling the reef or swimming in the clear blue lagoon. Kuda Bandos is the ultimate Robinson Crusoe experience, where you can have your first swim, with lunch or dinner on the island or aboard your yacht under the moon and stars.

### Day 2: Olhahali Island

This beautiful island lies at the northern tip of North Malé Atoll to the north and offers a special underwater attraction known as Olhahali Cave. There are a couple of smaller caves measuring 15 and 20 metres, but the main attraction is a huge 40 metre long cave with a depth of 25 metres. The cave has a ceiling of blue and white soft corals, as well as sea fans and sponges. The reef also hosts moray eels, stingrays, turtles and puffer fish, with apoleons, white tip sharks and eagle rays often seen out in the open water. With a long pristine white sandy beach, this is also one of the best islands for a picnic in Maldives.

### Day 3: Anantara Kihavah

Tranquil private villas, underwater dining and boundless horizons. All this can be included at the Anantara Kihavah Villas Maldives at Baa Atoll. Situated on the crystal clear waters of a

secluded lagoon, it is a haven of infinity pool villas in a luxury resort that offers the ultimate in privacy and tranquility. Culinary art and wine are served amidst a panorama of aquatic life in the world's only underwater restaurant and wine cellar. Spend the day rejuvenating at the Anantara Spa as you discover luxurious seclusion at one of the foremost Maldives resorts.

### Day 4: Nibiliga Island

A small but exclusive island near Coco Palm Dhunikolhu and an add-on for those who wish to spend an extra day in the pristine natural beauty of Baa Atoll, Nibiligaa is one of the uninhabited islands of Baa Atoll. Located in the Mendhoo Region are Nibiligaa Island and reef, Mendhoobinmathee Faru, Mendhoo Island and reef and Kaburu Faru. Special attractions include a very high natural biodiversity and an extensive population of hard and soft corals with associated marine invertebrates and vertebrates as well as nesting sites for green and hawksbill turtles. Nibiligaa is a key bird roosting and nesting site for Lesser Noddies and Brown Noddies as well as the Black-Naped Tern, Greater Crested Tern and Frigate Birds.

### Day 4: Gemendhoo Island

If your trip ends at Anantara Kihavah, Gemendhoo is a 'must visit' island before you begin your return journey to Malé. Just south of Anantara Resort, this beautiful, small island has one of the finest and cleanest beaches in the Maldives.