



## Maldives welcomes the 500,000th tourist for the year 2020

Joint Press Statement by the Ministry of Tourism, Maldives Marketing and Public Relations Corporation (MMPRC), Maldives Airports Company Limited (MACL) and Maldives Immigration

Today marks the grand arrival of the 500,000th tourist for the year 2020. During a momentous ceremony held at Velana International Airport today, the tourist was identified by the Ministry of Tourism, together with Maldives Marketing and Public Relations Corporation (MMPRC), Maldives Immigration and Maldives Airports Company Limited (MACL). The 500,000th tourist, Kirstin Madeleine Nittke, arrived from Germany via Emirates.

On arrival, she was identified at the Immigration counter and greeted by the welcoming team. She was then presented with a sash and flower garland around her neck.

She was ushered outside where she was then escorted onto the stage where senior officials of the Ministry of Tourism, MMPRC, Maldives Immigration and MACL received her. On stage, there was a festivity of Maldivian cultural activities, live *Bodu Beru* and *Dhandi Jehun* by traditional boduberu group, *Bidhabin*.

She was then awarded a special gift by Dr. Naushad Mohamed, Deputy Minister of Tourism; a product from Maldives Wave; Velaa series from Liyela collection.

Upon this accomplishment, the Minister of Tourism, Honorable Dr. Abdulla Mausoom, stated, "Today we celebrate the arrival of 500,000 tourists. Surpassing this milestone in this challenging year in advance of the forecasted date is the result of combined efforts of tourism industry partners and the government. It is the result of HEP Solih's timely decisions backed by the tourism industry partners' determination to revive our tourism industry. Thanks to travel and tourism industry partners, employees, and associations. I take this opportunity to convey heartfelt appreciation to the Health Protection Agency, health professionals, related government authorities, and volunteers for their hard work to brand the Maldives as a safe and secure destination to the international community. A very warm applause to the lovely Maldivians for this remarkable achievement. #TogetherWeCan."

The special gift, *Tanu*, was handed over by the Managing Director of MMPRC, Mr. Thoyyib Mohamed, alongside special gifts by the Deputy Controller of Maldives Immigration, Mr. Ibrahim Ashraf, and the Managing Director & Chief Operating Executive of MACL, Mr. Gordon Andrew Stewart.

A Holiday Voucher of a 7-nights complimentary accommodation in an Island Villa on Full Board Basis, at Coco Bodu Hithi was also handed over by Mr. Mohamed Shiham, the Operations Manager of Coco Bodu Hithi.

"Amidst such a pandemic, it is a remarkable feat to keep on achieving such milestones. We welcomed the 100,000th visitor since the border reopening just a few days ago and today we are celebrating the arrival of the 500,000th visitor for the year. This is, indeed, the result of joint efforts by the entire tourism industry in both the public and private sector. I would like to congratulate everyone for their hard work in making this year such a successful one," remarked Mr. Thoyyib Mohamed, the Managing Director of MMPRC.





This was followed by the presentation of a voucher for the first of its kind COVID-19 Insurance by Allied Inbound, by Mr. Ahmed Shabiq, the General Manager of Allied Insurance and a special gift by Mr. Shabeen Ali, the Director Network IT & Planning of Ooredoo.

The Controller General of Immigration, Mr. Mohamed Ahmed Hussain stated, “On this special occasion I would like to congratulate the 500,000th tourist of 2020 and everyone involved in the tourism industry for achieving this milestone. For decades, Maldives has been famous for its natural beauty and world-class hospitality attracting travelers from around the globe. Despite this global pandemic, we “Maldives Immigration” dedicate our commitments and full support to harness the tourism industry and move forward to boost our economy.”

The CEO & MD of MACL Mr. Andrew Gordon Stewart also expressed his sentiments on this special day. “We have great news from the Maldives. We have reached the 500,000th tourist arrival milestone and this is a remarkable achievement which we are all very proud of. So much effort has been put in place for this day and I can honestly say that Team Maldives did exceptionally well in promoting destination Maldives as a safe place to visit. We believe that we have contributed our part in maintaining our high safety standards at Velana International Airport and with our attractive incentive packages to our partner airlines. I would like to continue to assure our guests that Velana International Airport will maintain its high standards of safety until vaccines are successfully administered. The Maldives has already earned international recognition as a great holiday destination and the future looks bright, in fact sunny. Every month our Tourist Arrivals are increasing, and this is very positive and encouraging, where Tourism is the backbone of Maldives. I congratulate our lucky 500,000th tourist this year and I thank all stakeholders who have made the Maldives Dream come true.”

The event was held together with the support of industry and media partners, and it concluded with a group photo taken with the tourist alongside all the event partners, followed by a cultural performance.

It is anticipated that the country will reach peak arrival rates during the year of 2021, taking the rate up to 1.5 million tourist arrivals.

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