

# MALDIVES

## TOURISM BULLETIN

Volume: 03  
March 2021

### HIGHLIGHTS

News and events from industry

### CONVERSATIONS

Prominent personalities, promising faces

### UPDATES

Trends, market updates & tourist facilities



MINISTRY OF TOURISM  
REPUBLIC OF MALDIVES





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# HIGHLIGHTS & NEWS FROM VISIT MALDIVES

By: Maldives Marketing & Public Relations Corporation



2021 started off with the welcoming of the first visitor for the year; a German national called Jochen Paul Karch. He was warmly welcomed by the Visit Maldives team, as well as officials of the Ministry of Tourism, Maldives Immigration and Maldives Airports Company Limited (MACL). The German speaking market remains a traditional source of market for tourist arrivals in Maldives. For the year 2021, several activities have been planned for this market to achieve the target of pre-pandemic arrivals, which includes joint campaigns with leading airlines and tour operators, digital media campaigns and visibility campaigns. Visit Maldives will also be taking part in ITB Berlin, one of the world's leading trade shows which will be held virtually in March. The use of German language-focuses activities is also in the works to promote Maldives.

Moving forward, the month of January 2021 ended for Visit Maldives with the commencement of the implementation process of 2021's strategies, objectives and goals. This was implemented as part of the strategy to maintain brand visibility in the global market with focus on potential markets that would bring immediate impact in terms of arrivals numbers, such as creating destination awareness and increasing tourist arrivals to pre-pandemic levels. Additionally, the tactically planned activities were adopted to gain the best out of the

largely uncertain situation in certain key markets, in conjunction with the crisis plan which continues to change according to the situation.

Hence, Visit Maldives embarked into February shifting gears, more prepared than ever before. The shift itself was accompanied by not one, but five activities that were initiated all around the globe with a substantial focus on the current source markets in January, sliding into February with two more for the road.

In early January, Visit Maldives kick-started a social and digital marketing campaign with Odigeo, one of the top Online Travel Agencies (OTA) in France. Targeting a potential 1.6 million unique monthly visitors on their Opodo website and more than 450,000 of their social media followers, this partnership aims to increase destination awareness and boost arrivals to the Maldives during the low season. In this campaign, our wonderful island destination is showcased through a dedicated, well-established microsite that is available for the millions, with supporting EDMs a final touch to garner that additional hint of visibility.

Jumping to mid-January, Visit Maldives reached out for the larger audience, commencing an immense marketing campaign with the Expedia Group, aiming to

## Microsite

<https://www.opodo.fr/promo/office-tourisme/maldives/>

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promote the Maldives as one of the most secluded and serene destinations in the entire world. This four-month campaign targets some of the top source markets to the Maldives including Russia, Middle East, China and India, assuring potential travelers that the Maldives continues to remain as one of the most accessible destinations during this unprecedented situation. Reaching over 23 million people, the key messaging of this campaign will highlight the unique geographical formation of the island nation, owing to the natural dispersion of the islands - ensuring a worry-free holiday for the travelers.

Moving onto late-January, Visit Maldives commenced the first familiarization trip of 2021 as they welcomed a media team from the UAE to promote Maldives. With a purpose of showcasing the unique experiences available in our island-nation, this trip specifically highlighted the Maldives in terms of family, safety, and affordability. As representatives of Savoir Flair, The National, Millennium Millionaire & Fact Abu Dhabi – leading publications in the Middle East – spend six days in both Grand Park Kodhipparu and Sheraton Maldives Full Moon Resort & Spa, the potential coverage-to-be aimed at circulation numbers of 95,000, with an online reach of more than 3.7 million.

Additionally, Visit Maldives launched a joint marketing campaign with India's leading integrated travel services company, Thomas Cook India. Kick-starting a three-month long campaign with the aim of increasing travelers' demand to the Maldives, this partnership includes highly focused marketing activities and the utilization of the digital channels of Thomas Cook India to create destination awareness and enhance the visibility of Maldives in the already potent source

market. In adherence to this campaign, the Managing Director of Visit Maldives, Mr. Thoyyib Mohamed stated that, "We have selected Thomas Cook India, India's leading integrated travel services company to commence our activation in the high potential Indian market." Mr. Thoyyib Mohamed also highlighted that the team is definitely delighted to commence this collaboration with hopes that their efforts in marketing the Maldives will be a success.

Aiming to tick one more off the list, Visit Maldives started yet another global campaign in late-January, this time, with the world largest travel platform – TripAdvisor. Under the concept of "Escape to Maldives: Calm Awaits", this campaign will run from January 2021 to September 2021, targeting the US, Europe, and APAC region, which will connect Maldives with the largest travel community in the world. "The Escape to Maldives: Calm Awaits campaign is a content series in partnership with TripAdvisor that looks to inspire travelers to take their dream trip, sit back and enjoy the beauty of Maldives", said Sarah Mathews, Group Head of Destination Marketing APAC at TripAdvisor. As such, this campaign aims to create more destination awareness with compelling content and curated itineraries, in order to influence potential travelers to Maldives.

During the first week of February, Visit Maldives continued to launch the year's second, India focused joint marketing campaign – this time, with India's largest online travel agency, MakeMyTrip. The three-month long campaign targets potential travelers from India and promotes the Maldives with ongoing promotional offers and discounts, as well as various digital activities aimed at its customer-base of more than 42 million.

*Safe haven surrounded by  
pristine blue waters*



[www.visitmaldives.com](http://www.visitmaldives.com)

\* Fly from South Africa to Maldives  
via Air Seychelles, Emirates and Qatar

**REDISCOVER**  
Maldives ...the sunny side of life

 **Maldives** ...the sunny side of life

Further to this, Visit Maldives commenced the second familiarization trip of 2021, welcoming the well-renowned freelance journalist, Lisa Kjellsson, from the United Kingdom to promote the Maldives to the UK market. With a purpose of promoting the Maldivian islands as one of the safest destinations to travel to during the current situation and showcase the unique experiences in the Maldives with a specific focus on safety, luxury, and eco-initiatives, Lisa will be hosted by Kuramathi Island Resort, The Nautilus Maldives, Four Seasons Landaa Giraavaru, Hurawalhi Maldives, Kagi Maldives Spa Island and Six Senses Laamu. Contributing to high profile travel and lifestyle publications such as Sleeper, Tatler, West London Living, Citizen Femme and Robb Report, Lisa's trip would generate a combined number of nearly a million readers, with her articles strengthening the Maldives brand in the market as a top-of-the-mind destination.

Additionally, a third familiarization trip was conducted in the second week of February, with Visit Maldives welcoming key journalists from the Russia & CIS market to promote the destination as a safe haven for travelers and to showcase the unique experiences in the Maldives with a similar focus on safety, luxury and eco-initiatives of the destination. For this, two batches of media groups visited the Maldives, with the first batch bringing in chief editors of Forbes, Cosmopolitan, Esquire and Harper's Bazaar from Kazakhstan, who stayed in Sheraton Maldives Full Moon Resort & Spa and Kuramathi Maldives. The second batch brought in chief editors from KP.ru, RIA and Hello!Russia from Russia, also experienced similar luxury and eco initiatives offered in Sheraton Maldives Full Moon Resort and Spa and

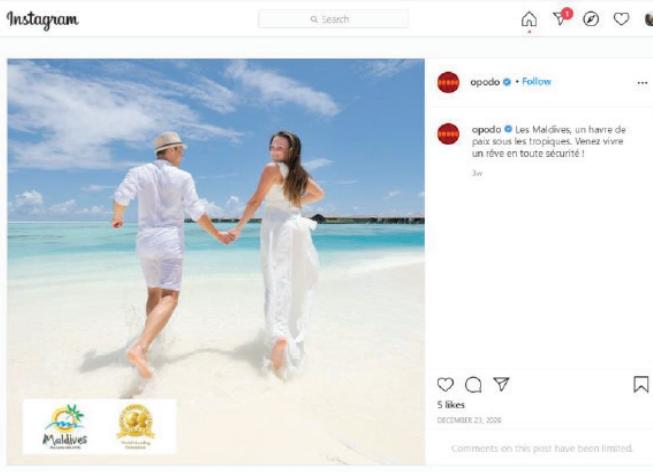
## eDreams ODIGEO

## Facebook and Instagram post

Robinson Club Noonu. The combined articles generated from these two batches would have huge circulation numbers and reach within the Russian & CIS market.

Maldives was also recognized as the 3rd most-searched international destination on Travelzoo's U.S. website in 2020, with a surge in interest coming after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Several 5-star resorts in the Maldives including the Park Hyatt Maldives, You & Me Maldives, and KIHAA Maldives partnered up with Travelzoo to promote irresistible, luxury experiences for Travelzoo members. The tremendous interest from these offers helped the Maldives climb from 40th in international searches before the pandemic all the way up to 3rd – with a search increase of 275% year over year on the U.S. Travelzoo website. Thanks to these custom luxury experiences, Travelzoo members booked more than 73,000 future room nights in the Maldives for 2021 and beyond. Travelzoo has over 30 million members worldwide, including over 14 million members in the U.S. alone, consistently inspiring its members to book new experiences and visit new destinations.

With so much having already accomplished within the span of one-and-a-half months, Visit Maldives aims high, focusing on an assortment of activities for the remainder of the year. This includes and is most definitely not limited to participating in world-class travel and trade fairs and exhibitions, conducting roadshows both online and physically, conducting major joint marketing campaigns with even more well-established travel agents, tour operators and airlines, continuing the current spree of familiarization trips and a lot more. Some major upcoming fairs include SATTE, MITT, ITB and a lot more, while a lot more are still in the pipeline.



Need help with travel plans impacted by COVID-19? Your online itinerary is the best place to cancel your trip. For more information about refund timelines or other help, visit the [FAQs](#).

Go to your itinerary [View COVID-19 details](#)

#### Search stays

Victoria (SZE - Seychelles Intl.)

Add a flight  Add a car

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Free cancellation on most hotels. Because flexibility matters.

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Welcome to 2021

New year, new adventures. Take a look at our January deals to help you celebrate.

#### Find your next destination



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Two nights for two in select cities starting in January.



Washington D.C., Phoenix, Jacksonville, St. Louis, Atlanta, Denver, Milwaukee, Indianapolis, and more.

Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Boston, Cleveland, Milwaukee, Indianapolis, and more.

Baltimore, Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, Indianapolis, and more.

Seattle, Portland, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and more.

Chicago, Detroit, and more.

Atlanta, Birmingham, and more.

Orlando, Disney World, and more.

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# **IN CONVERSATION WITH MS. FATHIMATH SHAAZLEEN**

## **The Resort Manager of Soneva Jani**

Ms. Fathimath Shaazleen, commonly known as Shaaz is an inspiring working mother. Being actively involved in the hospitality industry for over 20 years, she has made her way up to this prestigious position with hard work and dedication. We reached out to her to find out about her journey in this industry.



### **Tell us a little bit about yourself?**

I grew up in Lh Naifaru and moved to Male' to complete my secondary studies. While I was studying for my A' levels the Hotel School opened up applications for the first diploma courses. Straight after my A' levels I enrolled in Hotel School to complete my BTEC Diploma in Hospitality Operations.

### **Did you start your career from the hospitality industry? What was your first job?**

Yes. My first job was as a Telephone Operator at Veligandu Island Resort. After just one week, I asked the general manager to give me additional jobs to do. There was no way I could just sit in a room all week. Now when I think back, this request was one of the most important steps I took in my career. Within few weeks, I was working as a housekeeping supervisor and within a year, I was working in F&B. I thought I had found my home.

### **What inspired you to join the hospitality industry?**

Reading about Soneva Fushi in its early days interested me to work in this industry. Before I joined hotels school, I had no exposure to any resort, and to be honest, until I started working I did not know how things are at a resort. The more I learn, I started feeling more comfortable and wanted to do more. The opportunity to meet people from different corners of the world and seeing their appreciation to what we offer keeps the motivation going.

### **You've worked your way up to your current position. Could you tell us about your journey in this industry?**

One of the reasons that attracted me to this industry was Soneva Fushi in the early days. Reading about their story intrigued me and I wanted to work there. During my time at Veligandu, I was constantly on the lookout for an opportunity to join that team. I got the opportunity to join Soneva in their Guest Relations team, and that's my introduction to luxury hospitality. My next move was to Huvaen Fushi as a Front Office Manager and this was a very fulfilling role with a very energetic team. I got the opportunity to rejoin Soneva late 2009, this time in Thailand at Soneva Kiri Resort as a Rooms Division Manager. Working outside the Maldives in a different culture was a great learning experience. After 2 years, I returned to the Maldives and joined Dusit Thani Maldives in their preopening team. Working in a pre-opening is a great way to understand overall operations of resort and I really enjoyed that. And a similar opportunity came from Velaa Private Island and I jumped at the opportunity.

In 2014, I got my first resort manager position. I learned so much from my then GM and the team. 2 years in to the role, I left to have a baby and then I took a year off to be with my son. This break from the career was as rewarding if not more, than any job I had. The



*"I think the most important lesson I learned is not to limit myself with my capabilities. Take up any challenge as a learning opportunity. Invest in to develop yourself."*

opportunity of my current role came along at the right time. A dream job in one of the most beautiful resorts in the Maldives, with the possibility to have our little boy by my side, truly a dream.

**Can you describe your job as the Resort Manager at Soneva Jani? How do you keep your team motivated?**

My day starts early in the morning. This role gives the opportunity to engage and interact with a lot of people, our guests, and our hosts, and I see this as an important part of the role. We have structured times throughout the day when the leadership team meets to talk about the daily operations. Throughout the week, I also spend time with individual teams and key members to review and guide them on specific tasks and projects. Interaction and engagement is a great way to keep the team motivated, and it is essential for the team to know they are listened and supported. The days are long yet fulfilling. It is rewarding to be part of an energetic, hardworking, and fun team.

**What are the biggest challenges you have faced in this job?**

The is not a 9-5 job. My biggest challenge is to create a balance between my work and personal time.. I am truly blessed to be working in a dream job, and have my son living with me. I will be honest. Ensuring I spend quality time with him every day, without effecting my work is not easy. I am grateful for the opportunity and support I

get from all my team here.

**What are your thoughts on the Maldives tourism industry?**

The industry is gaining a lot of momentum. It is great to see that we are going steadily towards recovery while tourism in most countries is not doing so well. I think we are in a unique location and our one island one resort concept is giving us an edge, especially now with the current. Several new resorts are getting ready to open, creating employment opportunities and opening the market. I see a very bright future for the industry and hope to remain a part of this industry for years to come.

**How has Covid-19 pandemic changed the tourism industry for you and your resort?**

It has been a difficult year for all, and I think travel industry is one of the hardest hit industries. Slowly the country is recovering, and it is promising to see the gradual increase in the tourist arrivals. Travelers now are most conscious about the health and wellness and an overall experience. We are vigilant in our policies to ensure this. We must not forget that our hosts are spending more time at the resort now, compared to pre-covid days, as travel between the islands and resorts are restricted. More consideration to ensure the teams remain engaged and motivated.

Personally, for me, and I think for everyone, the quiet months have given us an opportunity to think about the importance of family time and relationships.



## **How did you manage COVID-19 pandemic at your resort? What strategies did you implement to overcome it?**

Soneva has established very stringent measures to ensure our islands remain COVID free. Whilst our internal procedures have been redefined to be in line with the protocols issued by the government. We have also invested in laboratory facility to conduct tests for all our guests and hosts. All our guests are required to test upon arrival and are isolated until the results are received. Our focus for health and wellness in all areas of the resort has taken an important turn.

## **What is your most memorable experience and valuable lesson from the tourism industry?**

Every role I have had and every property I have worked has been an important chapter of my career story. I think the most important lesson I learned is not to limit myself with my capabilities. Take up any challenge as a learning opportunity. Invest in to develop yourself.

## **Who are the people behind your success? Who encourages and supports you the most?**

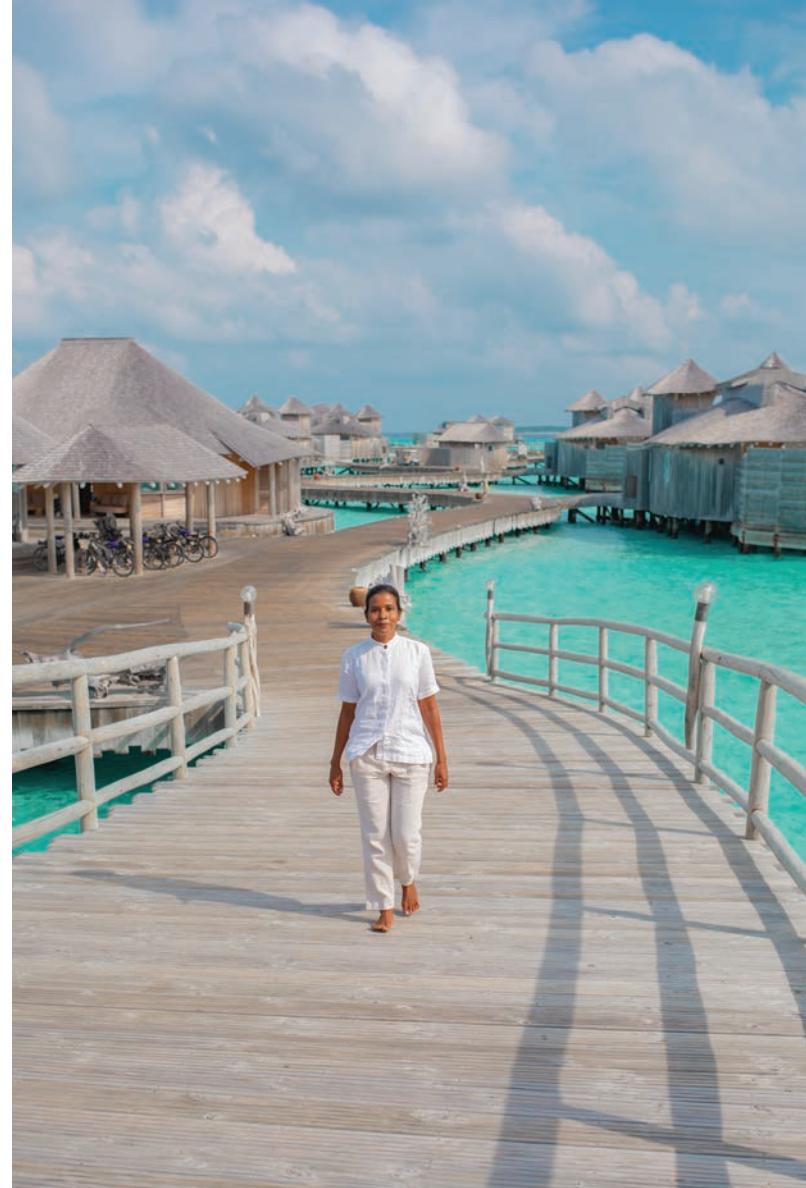
My family is my biggest supporters. Has it not been the trust and support from my parents when I expressed my wish to enter this industry, some 20 years ago when few girls were seen working in resorts, I would not have had this opportunity. My husband, who also is a hotelier, has encouraged me from day one to continue my career and has been my rock. My siblings, for being an additional set of parents to our son, whenever I call for help.

## **Any final thoughts?**

Over the years, I have worked in many teams and created some beautiful friendships. The acceptance helped me to continue in working in this industry. All the GM's I have worked with have given me many tips and lessons and have inspired me to follow their footsteps. I am thankful and grateful for those opportunities.

Finally, those who have stepped in to live with us as part of our family, to be a friend, a sister and minder for our son. Without their support, I will not be where I am today, and I am forever grateful for these angels....

And of course, thanks to the team of Soneva Jani for embracing us in to the family!



*“Interaction and engagement is a great way to keep the team motivated, and it is essential for the team to know they are listened and supported. The days are long yet fulfilling. It is rewarding to be part of an energetic, hardworking, and fun team.”*



## **MS. FATHMATH HASSAN WAHEED**

### **Assistant HR Manager of Huvafenfushi**

*Ms. Fathmath Hassan Waheed is the Assistant Human Resource Manager at Hufavenfushi Maldives since 2018. She describes herself as a simple woman with a simple mindset. She has been working away from her family for more than 14 years and living in the resorts and fully committed to her job. Hospitality industry was a dream for her since childhood and she has been living her dream since 2005.*

#### **You have completed your education with double Masters. Tell us about your experience.**

I started studying in 2005 at Maldives national university where I completed my certificate / Diploma level. In the year 2014, I completed my Bachelor in Business and Tourism Management at MNU. And did my double masters in 2015 & 2017. That is; Master's in Business Administration - Australian Institution of Business (affiliated by MAPs) and Masters in Hospitality and Tourism Management in Maldives National University. Well, this was hard and challenging but I managed to complete my studying in two different colleges at same time, while I was working at Huvafen Fushi Resort.

I am passionate about learning new skills, experiences, teaching and sharing my knowledge's to others. Through experience, I have developed strong leadership skills and I always keep trying until I succeed in my goal since, I believe that if you try there is nothing that is going to stop you for being a successful woman in the industry.

#### **How did you end up at HR department?**

I started my career first as an F&B Hostess in Gili Lankan Fushi in 2005. Later in 2007, I joined Front office department of Huvafen Fushi where I filled the position of Assistant GRO and GRO position. That was the time that I gained extensively customer service knowledge. After few years (during 2010-2016), I moved to Finance department and worked as a Night Auditor, Day auditor and Income Auditor. After completing my Masters in Hospitality and Tourism Management I finally took a step in to the field where I wanted to build my career, ie; in Human Resources department where I joined as an HR Supervisor and promoted as an Assistant Human Resources Manager in 2018.

#### **What motivated you to join the hospitality industry?**

Since my school days, working in Hospitality industry was one of my dreams. When I got chance to work on my dream, I decided to take it and never regretted the choice of moving in to this Industry, which I made 15 years back. Hospitality industry is the place where you can grow your career and provides unlimited opportunities and maximizes people's working capabilities by allowing us to access practical skills, and learning something new every day.

The reason why I love hospitality industry is simple: it is Enjoyable, and Fun. All the dynamics, with different responsibilities and the feeling you have when you have done something good for your team members, it's more than satisfactory at the end of the day. And it does not stop because I am a woman, as everyone should have the opportunity to work, meet and socialize with people representing yourself to others equally as Men's.

#### **What is a typical day for you at work like?**

I start my shift at 09am everyday & works on planned activities for the staff. In office hours, I focus on recruiting, Interviewing and scheduling them for the

next day. Involving in HR activities from A-Z and participating activities, meeting, listening to staff concerns and many more... every day is a different day where I have to deal with new things... working in HR I found it quite fun and exciting..

**What was the biggest challenge you've faced so far?**  
The biggest challenge I faced was completing my studies while I was working. It has affected to my personal life to some extent since I was more engaged in studying and working, however with an understandable people around me, it has made it easier for me to reach my goal. To achieve something, you always have to sacrifice certain things in life.

**How do you balance work and life responsibilities?**  
I manage my time at work and make myself available for family time too.

**Do you think women in this industry have a hard time climbing up the ladder?**

I cannot say hard time, but if you have a goal to achieve and if you walk on right path I am sure It won't be difficult. As tourism industry does not discriminate women's involvement.

**What do you think is the most significant barrier to female leadership in tourism?**

Most of the Females does not continue their career long, since most of the female work-out from the industry once they start a life and when they have kids. So I would say the biggest barrier to female is because of personal life sacrifices.

**Who are your biggest supporters in achieving your goal?**

My parents, brothers and sisters supports me always and my dream is to go as far as I can with this industry.

I always had a goal to be achieved and I believed in myself that I can do it. Like..."If they can then why can't I?"

**What changes do you wish to see happen that would make it more attractive for female leaders, especially locals?**

Man needs to change their thinking of working is not good for a woman after they start a life. It should be equally fair enough for both genders and chance should be given for interested women's who want to build their career in hospitality industry.

**Do you have role models of exceptional leadership in your life?**

Not specific but I always follow and learn from all the top leaders in the industry

**What advice would you give to women trying to break into leadership roles and young females looking for job opportunities in the hospitality industry?**

Do not regret for deciding to start career in hospitality industry, believe me, this will be one of the safest and best industry to grow, build your future. Industry is looking for more young females to the industry and I want to see an industry where we stand equally with male and female staff involving in the field.

jumped at the opportunity.

*"Hospitality industry is the place where you can grow your career and provides unlimited opportunities and maximize peoples working capabilities by allowing us to access practical skills, and learning something new every day. "*



# **MR. MOHAMED AFRAH**

## **The Business Journalist**



"Hard work and perseverance is the route to success" says Mohamed Afrah, the two times winner of Maldives Journalism Award, "like any other profession that requires dedication and commitment, journalism is also a field that requires the same. You have to be very much dedicated and committed to be a journalist" he added. Mr. Mohamed Afrah is the Deputy Editor and Senior Business Journalist at the online local newspaper Avas. With over 15 years of experience in the field of journalism, Afrah won the Maldives Journalism Award in 2019 and in 2020 in the category of business and economy.

Afrah started his journalism career in the early years of 2000 from Jazeera News. He later went on to join the popular local newspaper Haveeru Daily, where he worked till the newspaper was stopped in 2016. After that he joined Avas News, a print and online local newspaper, and has been working there since then. "When looking into my career, I have transitioned from one step to another and climb up in the job hierarchy with hard work. I joined Haveeru Daily as a junior reporter and was promoted to a senior journalist. Here at Avas, I started out as a journalist, worked hard and got promoted to a business editor. Now I am the Deputy Editor as well as a senior business journalist" he said reflecting on his career.

Studied at Male' English School (MES) and EPS School, Afrah has undergone several journalism trainings during his tenure at Haveeru newspaper. Afrah who developed an interest in journalism at a very young age, believes his footing in journalism was laid at school being with other students who turned out to be well known journalists in the Maldives. "While studying at MES, I participated in many Dhivehi language and literature related activities led by these soon to be journalists which I believe laid the foundation for my career" says Afrah.

Inspired by the pioneers of tourism in the Maldives, Afrah started writing about business and economy and has written numerous articles focusing on the Maldives tourism, "the pioneers of tourism in the Maldives has done a tremendous job", he said. He is also impressed by the joint efforts the government and private sector put into making Maldives a world class destination, "it's a huge achievement for a small country like Maldives to be a world famous destination, especially when the international organizations were convinced, at the beginning that tourism is not feasible in the Maldives" he added. Afrah writes over 40 articles per week on business and economy. He is optimistic about the current situation of tourism in the Maldives and sees tourism recovering soon with the current trends.

Though he is a full-time journalist with a very busy working schedule, he is a strong believer in having a good work-life balance. He prioritizes spending time with his wife and son also finds time for himself to work-out. "I try to finish all my work by four o'clock in the evening. After work, I go straight home and spend time with my family. I make sure I spend time with my son until 7 in the evening. I go to gym at 7pm", he explained. "My morning schedule is changed only if I have an event to cover at night which takes a lot of time".

**“Hard work and perseverance is  
the route to success”**





# CRUNCHING NUMBERS

Tourist arrivals to the Maldives increased in February 2021. While in January, an average of 2,971 tourists visited per day, the daily average for the month of February was at 3,460 tourists. This was by far, the greatest daily rate obtained after the start of the year 2021. A total of 96,881 tourists visited the Maldives in the month of February 2021.

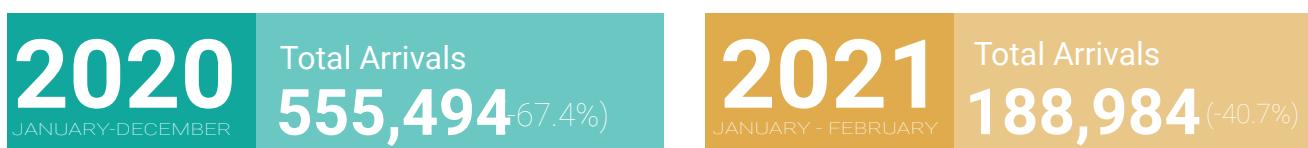
Since the opening of Maldives border in July 2020, the highest daily arrivals recorded was on 21st February with over 5200 tourists, crossing a huge milestone for the year. The second highest daily arrivals were also observed in February, dating 14th February with over 4800 tourists. Both these days fell not-so-coincidentally on a Sunday. Flight movements peak on Fridays and Sundays making it the most bustling days at Velana International airport after the Covid-19 pandemic.

By the end of February 2021, arrivals exceeded 180,000 reaching a total of 188,984 tourists with a year-on-year growth of -40.7%. Tourists however stayed in Maldives for a slightly shorter span in February with average nights decreasing from 9.2 in January to of 8.8 days in February.

The pandemic has significantly shifted the top source markets to the Maldives. New markets particularly from central and eastern Europe emerged while some of the traditional top source markets retained. In February, the top tourist generating markets are India, Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Germany, Romania, Switzerland, Czech Republic, United States and Hungary. The Russian market which had been leading since the beginning of border opening was overtaken by India in February 2021. Indian market held 23.3% shares while the Russian market held 21.5% shares by the end of February. Central European markets such as Hungary and Bulgaria also saw a sharp rise in tourists.

In February, Bulgarian tourists have increased rapidly since the operations of Gullivair began. Additionally LOT Polish Airlines started direct flights from Poland to the Maldives within the month. It is anticipated that the Polish market would grow in the coming days. Currently a total of 30 flights brings in tourists to the Maldives, amongst which 23 are scheduled and 7 are chartered. Interestingly visitors from central and eastern Europe arrive from chartered flights except for the scheduled flight Aeroflot.

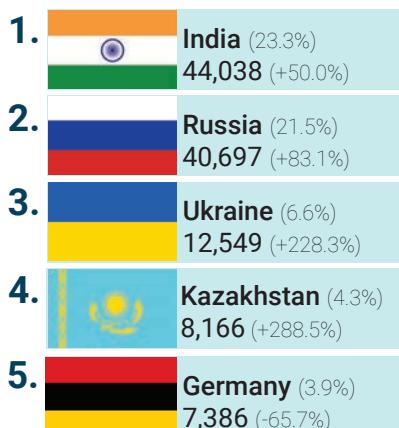
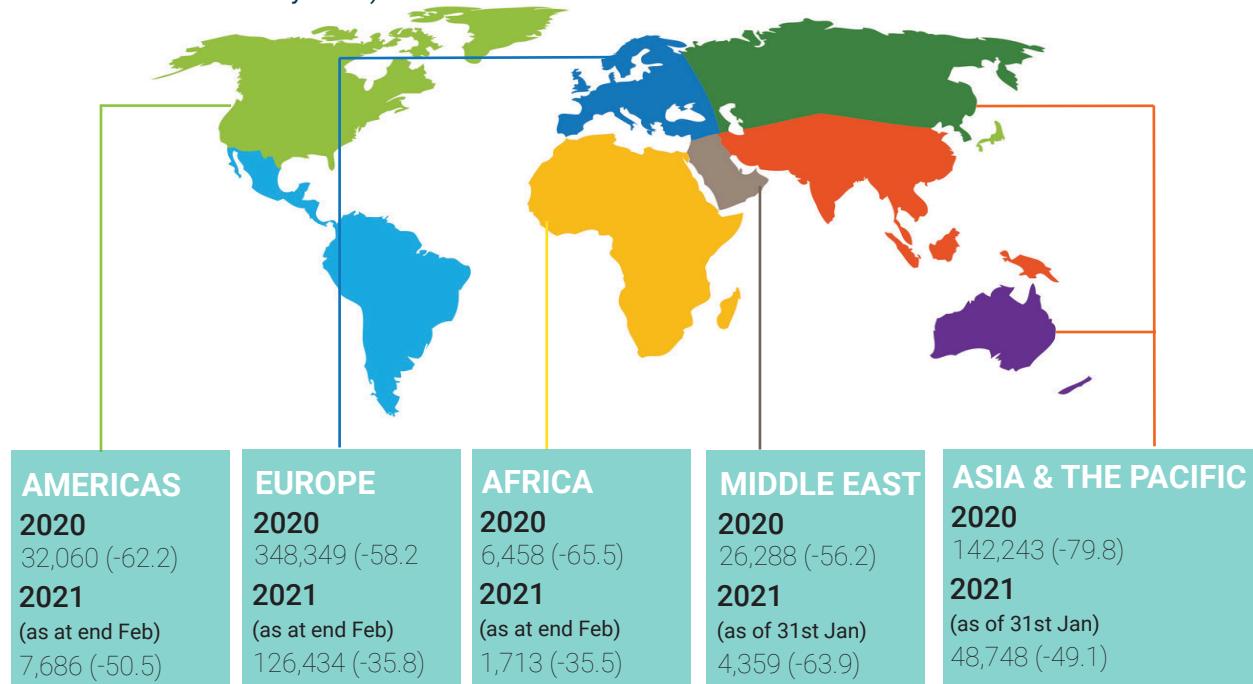
## TOURIST ARRIVALS



ARRIVALS	Arrivals		Growth (%)	Daily Average	Duration of Stay (days)
	2020	2021			
January	173,347	92,103	-46.9	2,971	9.2
February	145,215	96,881	-33.3	3,460	8.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>318,562</b>	<b>188,984</b>	<b>-40.7</b>	3,203	<b>9.0</b>

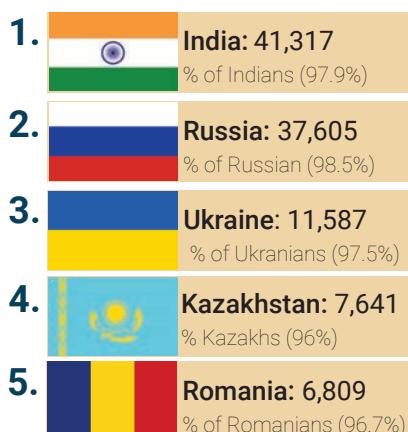
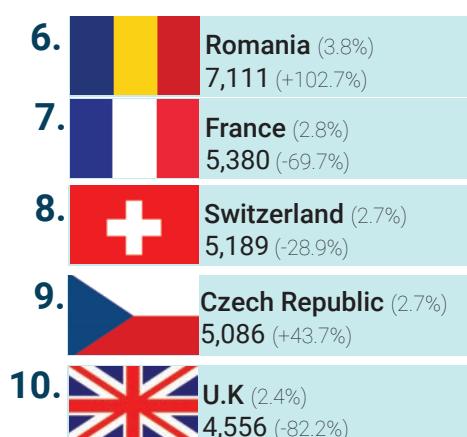
# MARKET TRENDS

(Arrivals as at end February 2021)



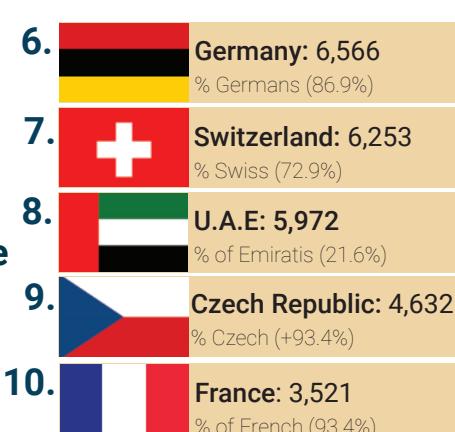
## TOP 10 MARKETS by Nationality

(as of 28th February 2021)



## TOP 10 ARRIVALS by Country of Residence

(as of 28th February)



# FACILITY UPDATES

(approved as at end February 2021)

**H.A. ATOLL**  
 2 **Resorts** 394 Beds  
 0 **Hotels** 0 Beds  
 7 **Guesthouses** 84 Beds

**SH. ATOLL**  
 2 **Resorts** 457 Beds  
 0 **Hotels** 0 Beds  
 1 **Guesthouse** 8 Beds

**R. ATOLL**  
 12 **Resorts** 2,962 Beds  
 0 **Hotels** 0 Beds  
 0 **Guesthouses** 0 Beds

**B. ATOLL**  
 16 **Resorts** 2,953 Beds  
 1 **Hotel** 150 Beds  
 18 **Guesthouses** 344 Beds

**A.A. ATOLL**  
 9 **Resorts** 1,906 Beds  
 0 **Hotels** 0 Beds  
 81 **Guesthouses** 1,060 Beds

**A.DH. ATOLL**  
 16 **Resorts** 4,200 Beds  
 1 **Hotel** 56 Beds  
 44 **Guesthouses** 682 Beds

**M. ATOLL**  
 2 **Resorts** 400 Beds  
 0 **Hotels** 0 Beds  
 1 **Guesthouse** 12 Beds

**F. ATOLL**  
 1 **Resorts** 250 Beds  
 0 **Hotels** 0 Beds  
 1 **Guesthouses** 14 Beds

**TH. ATOLL**  
 1 **Resorts** 152 Beds  
 0 **Hotels** 0 Beds  
 1 **Guesthouses** 12 Beds

**G.DH. ATOLL**  
 3 **Resorts** 550 Beds  
 0 **Hotels** 0 Beds  
 2 **Guesthouses** 38 Beds

**S. ATOLL**  
 1 **Resort** 100 Beds  
 1 **Hotel** 156 Beds  
 8 **Guesthouses** 164 Beds

**H.DH. ATOLL**  
 0 **Resorts** 0 Beds  
 1 **Hotel** 104 Beds  
 3 **Guesthouses** 50 Beds

**N. ATOLL**  
 7 **Resorts** 1,398 Beds  
 0 **Hotels** 0 Beds  
 1 **Guesthouses** 24 Beds

**LH. ATOLL**  
 9 **Resorts** 2,250 Beds  
 0 **Hotels** 0 Beds  
 1 **Guesthouse** 12 Beds

**K. ATOLL**  
 48 **Resorts** 11,742 Beds  
 6 **Hotels** 856 Beds  
 149 **Guesthouses** 3,536 Beds

**V. ATOLL**  
 2 **Resorts** 302 Beds  
 0 **Hotels** 0 Beds  
 28 **Guesthouses** 368 Beds

**DH. ATOLL**  
 8 **Resorts** 2,782 Beds  
 0 **Hotels** 0 Beds  
 0 **Guesthouses** 0 Beds

**L. ATOLL**  
 2 **Resorts** 242 Beds  
 0 **Hotels** 0 Beds  
 2 **Guesthouses** 78 Beds

**G.A. ATOLL**  
 6 **Resorts** 1,036 Beds  
 1 **Hotel** 136 Beds  
 0 **Guesthouses** 0 Beds

**GN. ATOLL**  
 0 **Resorts** 0 Beds  
 0 **Hotels** 0 Beds  
 11 **Guesthouses** 116 Beds

Accommodation Facilities  
(as of 28 Feb 2021)

No.s	Beds	
Resorts / Marinas	147	34,076
Hotels	11	1,458
Guesthouses	359	6,602
Safari Vessels	140	2,723
Total	657	44,859



# MALDIVES BEGINS NATION WIDE VACCINATION CAMPAIGN



The Maldives kicked off its nation-wide COVID-19 vaccination campaign on 1st February 2021 with the inoculation of President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih, Parliament Speaker Mohamed Nasheed and Chief Justice Ahmed Muhtasim Adnan. Following the president, several top officials and diplomats got their first dose of the vaccine on the day.

The campaign which started from the capital Male' City, Kulhudhuffushi City in Haa Dhaalu Atoll and Addu City was first administered to frontline health professionals and individuals at a high risk of developing complications such as people aged 50 and above.

The vaccination campaign is now open for all aged 20 years and above. As of 28th February a total of 111,415 people have been given their first dose of the COVISHIELD Vaccine, which is being administered in the Maldives.

With the aim of creating a safer image of Maldives tourism to the international community and to immunize the tourism industry staff against COVID-19, the Ministry of Tourism in collaboration with the Health Protection Agency of the Maldives, initiated a vaccination drive for the tourism sector frontline workers on 4th February 2021.

Minister of Tourism Dr. Abdulla Mausoom inaugurated the tourism sector vaccination program. Speaking at the event, Minister Dr. Mausoom stated that vaccination arrangements will be made in resorts so that employees can get vaccinated with convenience.



Under this vaccination drive, a total of 10,000 tourism sector frontline staff from resorts, liveaboard safaris, guesthouses, airport representatives and as well as local artists will be inoculated.

As of 28 February, a total of 6,506 employees from the tourism sector have been vaccinated.

# MONTH IN REVIEW

## MOU Signed Between MoT & MNU



The Ministry of Tourism signed an MOU that supports cooperation on capacity building in the field of tourism.

## New Island on Bid for Tourism Development



The Ministry of Tourism announced a public tender on 8th February 2021 for the lease of a 132,000 square feet plot of land in Noonu Atoll Manadhu, for the development of tourist hotel. This lease is open to all eligible local and foreign bidders, for a lease period of 50 years pursuant to Section 8 of the Law Number/2/99 (Maldivian Tourism Act). Bid documents could be purchased from 8th February 2021 up to the 10th March 2021, between 09:00hrs to 13:00hrs, at the Ministry of Tourism. Information session for interested parties was held on 18th February 2021. Two parties attended this information session held virtually at Ministry of Tourism.

## The Maldives was Travelzoo's 3rd Most Searched Destination for 2020



The Maldives ranked as the 3rd most-searched international destination on Travelzoo's U.S. website in 2020, with a surge in interest coming after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Travelzoo has over 30 million members worldwide, including over 14 million members in the U.S. alone. Since its inception in 1998, Travelzoo has inspired its members to book new experiences and visit new destinations. With the onset of the pandemic, Visit Maldives and the many tourist establishments in the Maldives had to change their means of communication and relevant marketing strategies to align with the most recent and convenient trends on digital and social media platforms.

# Workshop on new Law for Tour Operators and Tour Agents



A special workshop was held on 25 February 2021 at the People's Majlis, initiated by the Parliament in relation to the on going drafting of a new law on Tour Operators and Travel Agents in the Maldives.

The workshop was inaugurated by the Hon. Speaker of the Majlis, President Mohamed Nasheed. The Minister of Tourism Dr. Abdulla Mausoom gave a speech at this workshop, whcih was attended by several tour operators and travel agents in the Maldives.

## Maldives Becomes the Most Instagrammed Destination



According to an analysis by mybaggage.com, The Maldives is the most instagrammed tourist destination right now, with the Eiffel Tower and Times Square close behind.

The team at My Baggage has researched and revealed that more photos in the Maldives are shared on instagram than of any other tourist destination or landmark in the world. The team noted that the COVID-19 pandemic and various worldwide lockdowns brought a halt to many holidays for Brits, and a newfound appreciation for travel sparked. This is a sentiment that people from all over the world will be experiencing right now.

# AITKEN SPENCE MALDIVES RESORTS SHINES AT STELLERS AWARD 2020

By: Adaaran Resorts

The banner features the Stelliers 2020 logo at the top. Below it, four circular portraits of award winners are displayed, each with their name and title:

- TOP 5 - CORPORATE & SUSTAINABILITY HOTELIER OF THE YEAR 2020**: THARAKA APPUHAMY, ASSISTANT GENERAL MANAGER, TALENT MANAGEMENT & QUALITY ASSURANCE, AITKEN SPENCE RESORTS, MALDIVES.
- WINNER - CSR HOTELIER OF THE YEAR 2020**: AHMED ANWAR, ASSISTANT HR MANAGER CUM TRAINING MANAGER, ADAARAN SELECT MEEDHUPPARU, MALDIVES.
- WINNER - HOUSEKEEPING HOTELIER OF THE YEAR 2020**: BEEDE PERERA, EXECUTIVE HOUSEKEEPER, ADAARAN PRESTIGE VADOO, AMERICS.
- TOP 5 - SOMMELIER & MIXOLOGIST HOTELIER OF THE YEAR 2020**: LENKA PRAVEEN, EXECUTIVE SOMMELIER, HERITANCE AARAH, MALDIVES.

A small Aitken Spence Maldives logo is located at the bottom center of the banner.

Stelliers 2020 went virtual this year, given the circumstances that ensued with the onset of a pandemic that engulfed almost the entire world this year. The award ceremony was held virtually and the event concluded successfully. This year, four of our best managers represented Aitken Spence Resorts Maldives. They were selected to the final round of the 'Stelliers Hotelier Awards 2020' and we are proud to state that we have two winners and two top five finalists in Asia, under their respective disciplines.

With the virtual announcement of the Stelliers Awards taking place on 4th December 2020, Ahmed Anwar of Adaaran Select Meedhupparu became the Stelliers 2020 CSR Hotelier and Beed Perera of Adaaran Prestige Vadoo became the Stelliers 2020 Housekeeping Hotelier in the Stelliers 2020 edition.

Lenka Praveen from Heritage Aarah was placed amongst the Top 5 Mixologist / Sommeliers in Asia and Tharaka Appuhamy was placed among the Top 5 in the Sustainability Hotelier and Corporate Hotelier categories in Asia.

Stelliers is a leading hotelier awards platform and is the only accolade in Asia that honours dedicated professionals in the hotel industry. The annual rendezvous is an overdue recognition bestowed upon those individuals, who are the best in their field.

The winners in their categories; Anwar and Beed, have been employees of Adaaran Resorts for a while now. Ahmed Anwar works as Assistant HR cum L&D Manager for Adaaran Select Meedhupparu and his hard work and attention on the characteristic of working in cooperation with local communities whilst also striving to place Adaaran Select Meedhupparu higher up the pedestal amongst the locals is testament to his success thus far. He works closely with island communities and contributes and engages with local schools and gets involved in the training and development of youth in the field of hospitality operations.

The other gentleman who won an award in his category – Housekeeping Hotelier, Beed Perera of Adaaran Prestige Vadoo, currently works as Executive Housekeeper and has been with Aitken Spence Resorts Maldives for over five and a half years. He comes with over 23 years of experience in the hospitality industry and is regarded as a veteran in his field. Amongst his many achievements is his involvement with the 'Travelife Waste Champions' initiative globally for plastic waste management where he was responsible for the conception of Christmas decorations to be produced out of plastic waste. His creativity and dedication to do things in a different way, led his team to erect the tallest Christmas tree in the Maldives and the first of its kind to be made, using plastic waste in 2019.

Aitken Spence Resorts is a recognized international resort chain that has been in operation since 1993 in the Maldives. The chain has been very active in establishing a solid training ground for many local hoteliers in the nation since its inception and has ever since upheld the responsibility of grooming local talent towards forging a career in the field of resort operations in the Maldives. The Aitken Spence Hotels portfolio consists of 21 hotels, with 11 hotels in Sri Lanka, one in India, four in the Maldives and four in Oman.

# ADAM THOLHATH THE WINNER OF STELLIERS AWARDS FOR INSPIRING FUTURE GENERATIONS

By: Six Senses Laamu



Six Senses Education and Community Outreach Manager Adam Tholhath has been recognized on the global stage at 2020 Stelliers awards for inspiring the next generation of ocean stewards. Adam received his Stelliers Award for the Sustainable Hotelier of the year.

Stelliers is a Leading Hotelier Awards Platform with a mission to not only recognize the most talented hoteliers, but also to inspire the younger generations to pursue a career in hospitality. The Sustainable Hotelier award is a new addition to awards categories, reserved for a host who is leading the industry through environmentally friendly and socially responsible initiatives.

In his role as Education and Community Outreach Manager, Adam drives Six Senses Laamu's local community relations and leads the 'Eku Eky' (meaning 'together' in Dhivehi) initiative. A series of meetings held throughout the year brings together stakeholders to the same table to discuss sustainable development plans and find solutions to the most pressing issues facing the Atoll. Adam also leads a school outreach program, inspiring the next generation to advocate for their own island's natural resources. This program provides snorkeling sessions and marine books for all schools through guest donations.

Adam is also the driving force behind Plastic Free Laamu Atoll, which aims to eliminate single use plastics within the community. In 2019, reverse osmosis water filtration systems were donated to various government institutions in the atoll, bringing the total number donated by Six Senses Laamu to 63. They provide clean, plastic free drinking water to approximately 4,384 people, thereby avoiding an estimated 1.6 million single use plastic water bottles annually.

"This award is extremely well-deserved" says a very proud Marteyne van Well, General Manager of Six Senses Laamu. "Adam's commitment and efforts have, and continue to, pave the way for more sustainable relationships with stakeholders in Laamu at all levels, as well as inspire and empower the resort team in realm of sustainability."

This is the second Stelliers award to be presented to a Six Senses Laamu host, after Megan O'Beirne, former Sustainability Manager, was named South Asia's CSR Hotelier of the Year in 2018.

# MEANINGFUL MANTA CONNECTIONS IN THE MALDIVES

By: Four Seasons Landaa Giraavaru



Since 2005, the Maldives reef manta ray population in Baa Atoll has been continuously studied by the Maldivian Manta Ray Project (MMRP) – The Manta Trust's founding project, based at Four Seasons Landaa Giraavaru.

And as 2021's manta season approaches, guests at Landaa will once again be in prime position to swim with and study the world's largest recorded population of mantas alongside the experts responsible for identifying them.

"We know that the more people are aware of manta rays and their environment the more they're going to want to protect them," comments Beth Faulkner of the Maldivian Manta Ray Project. "Swimming with manta rays is an incredible experience because they're so intelligent and curious – once you've met a manta ray, there's no way you couldn't care about them. Yet it's also essential to develop our understanding of their behavior in the absence of humans, which is why our research involves both observed and remote underwater video surveys."

The MMRP recorded an estimated 4,625 sightings of reef manta rays between 15 August and 30 November 2020. Despite a three-month delay to the season's operations as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, 2020 sightings were 4% higher than 2019, and the third highest since records began. November 2020 also brought a major

milestone: the identification of the 5000th unique reef manta in the Maldives.

As well as collecting manta ID photos during 2020, MMRP also deployed 101 remote underwater video (RUV) systems across seven manta cleaning sites, using novel underwater time-lapse cameras as part of its Eyes on the Reef Project. It also contributed manta measurements and ultrasound scans to an ongoing PhD project at Cambridge University; submitted data on 12 whale shark sightings to the Maldives Whale Shark Research Programme (MWSRP); and delivered its immersive Maldives Marine Education Programme 'Moodhu Madharusaa' to local students.

With wingspans up to 7m (23ft), speeds of up to 24km per hour, and cognitive function on a par with dolphins, manta rays are some of the most impressive creatures in the ocean. Classed as "vulnerable" on the Red List of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Beth and The Manta Trust team know that by connecting people to mantas, the mantas' chances of survival will increase.

In addition to the importance of scientific research, the theme of conservation through connection underpinned the team's recent appearance on CNN. As part of the inspiring Call to Earth series, Beth outlined how The Manta Trust's "ultimate purpose is to get manta rays protected worldwide and also to protect the habitat they need to survive".



# GRAND PARK KODHIPPARU RECOGNIZED AS GUESTS PREFERRED CHOICE

By: Grand Park Kodhipparu

Guests feedback are most important for Grand Park Kodhipparu, Maldives to maintain and exceeds their service excellence. Guests reviews are taken seriously and accounted for in high regards as the resort is aiming for guests to discover the best of their experience in the Maldives.

In February, Grand Park Kodhipparu, Maldives is recognized by two online hotel reservation platforms, Booking.com and Hotels.com, for achieving the highest recognition by guests. Booking.com awarded the resort with Traveller Review Awards 2021 with a score of 9.2 out of 10, based on their users review of the resort services and features. While Hotels.com awarded the resort as Most Loved by Guests in their Most Wanted Awards with a score of 9.4 out of 10.

Both recognitions are proof of the resort's commitment to deliver exceptional services to guests while safely welcoming guests back to the Maldives. Grand Park Kodhipparu, Maldives have implemented safety & health protocol in place as per HPA guidelines and even offer an on-island PCR tests conducted by health professionals to ease guests in pertaining their PCR result before departure.

Grand Park Kodhipparu, Maldives is conveniently located 20 minutes from Velana International Airport and reachable by speedboat transfer. The resort features a collection of 120 idyllic beach front pool villas, breathtaking overwater villas and spacious two-bedroom villas. The resort offers a unique experience of culinary journey in the three dining outlets and private dining experiences. Equipped with a kids club, recreation beach club, marine and dive centers, the resort is a place to experience the Maldives at its best. An award-winning overwater Spa is offering a pampering experience like no other with selections of exquisite spa treatment and Maldives' signature hospitality







## **“GOLHA RIHA” The Signature Dish from Laamu Atoll**

By: Aminath Manal

“Golha riha” is a famous curry originating from Laamu atoll. When translated to English, “Golha riha” roughly means fish ball curry. This is quite an accurate take as one of the first things to strike anyone trying this dish are the bitesized fish balls. These balls made from freshly caught reef fish are covered in a thick savoury gravy, where the colour ranges from brownish tone to a greenish yellow one.

“Golha Riha” is a curry which is flavourful, delicious and of course having that famous Maldivian spicy kick. It has become a signature dish symbolising Laamu Atoll and has become a must try for anyone visiting the pristine Laamu Atoll.

Most ingredients used to make this signature side dish are locally grown and available, from the reef fish caught in the colourful reefs to the famous coconut trees which tower over the Maldivian landscape. The paste which is used to make the curry is also made locally with ingredients such as scotch bonnets, pandan leaf and curry leaves. Apart from this, a long list of several other ingredients are used to make this curry and its special curry paste such as onions, garlic, cumin, pepper, ginger, curry leaves, coriander seeds, fennel seeds, cardamom, cinnamon and dried chillies. Desiccated coconut as well as coconut milk and cream are also used.

The making of “Golha Riha” is time consuming and is done very carefully. But perhaps it is because of the care that is put into making this dish, that it makes our mouth

explode with flavour. Firstly, the reef fish is filleted, separating the flesh from the bones. When this is done, spices for the spice-mix are blended together to make a distinct curry paste just for this curry. Once a thick smooth paste is made, it is then mixed with the fish balls and left to marinate.

The leftover spice blend is used to create the curry aspect of the dish. It is mixed with coconut milk, curry leaves, pandan leaves and salt to taste! This mixture is cooked for about five minutes before adding the marinated fish balls. Then it is left to simmer for around fifteen minutes. For the final touches a bit of thick coconut cream is added and cooked for few more minutes and voila! The “Golha Riha” is done and ready to eat. It could be served alongside rice or the Maldivian flat bread (Roshi).

Golha Riha is the kind of dish that even though we might know the recipe and attempt to recreate it, only the people of Laamu who have passed it down from generation to generation can truly create the real deal! It is a dish which represents the identity of the people of Laamu, warm, inviting and an explosion of flavour and fun waiting to happen. If you visit Laamu Atoll, don't miss this signature dish.



#2022goldenyearoftourism