



The Best of the Maldives

7 days

You don't need a minimum number of dives but you should be comfortable with drift dives, as currents can be unpredictable and strong. If you are an Open Water Diver, some dives are below 18m therefore we recommend having advanced experience or taking your PADI Advanced Open Water course on board to maximise your enjoyment from the trip. Inexperienced and beginner divers may find some dives challenging and may be asked by the Cruise Director to skip dives that are not suitable for their diving experience. All diving is made from dhonis to give precise entry and exit points.

- **Rasdhoor Atoll:** Hammerhead Dive, Beautiful Reef with Pelagics
- **North Ari Atoll:** Grey Reef Sharks, Maaya Thila Night Dive, Multiple Manta Cleaning Stations
- **South Ari Atoll:** Whale Sharks, Beautiful Pinnacles
- **South Male Atoll:** Grey Reef Sharks, Eagle Rays, Other Pelagics, Beautiful Macro Wreck.
- **Vaavu Atoll:** Beautiful channels with magical soft corals and pelagic delights. Action packed night dive with Nurse Sharks and others.
- **North Male Atoll:** Beautiful Pinnacles.

This is the Best of the Maldives - and it delivers exactly that. This is where you dive the best and most famous dive sites of the Maldives in a week of wonderful liveboard diving across Male and Ari atolls. Enjoy a dive holiday that gives you all you could wish for from the iconic sites of North Male, South Male and Ari Atoll. Awaiting you are channels, drifts and pinnacles where you have every chance of meeting mantas, whale sharks and mesmerising marine life of so many varieties. We don't follow an exact itinerary; flexibility is the word so that no matter what time of the year you visit, this underwater world is yours (and ours) for the exploring.

This itinerary gives you a marine mix of big fish such as shark and manta dives as well as reef dives, reef fish, morays and the abundant macro life. Get up close at the cleaning stations without disturbing the locals! One of the best known dive sites is Maaya Thila; this pinnacle is approximately 30m in diameter and falls away to reveal sharks and fish a plenty.



A night dive from sheltered moorings here is a must! And the boat will also aim to find whale sharks so you can get in the water and snorkel with them...as long as they stay around long enough!

Rasdhoo Atoll

The small atoll of Rasdhoo lies off the northeastern corner of Ari Atoll proper. The atoll's main island, also called Rasdhoo, is the administrative capital of North Ari Atoll, despite not being within the natural atoll itself. Good chance to see mantas on various dive sites throughout the year.

Here are some possible sites you may visit:

- **Madivaru (Hukrueli Faru)** - Madivaru is home to a very colorful coral reef. The site is named for the abundance of manta rays seen here (Madi means manta ray in the Maldivian language Dhivehi) during the northeast monsoon season. Depths range from 25 feet to almost 100 feet, making the dive particularly interesting and varied. Manta rays are attracted to Madivaru because of the strong currents that form a whirlpool effect in the deeper parts of the site, where the manta rays can hover over the currents. The mantas are also attracted to the several cleaning stations located around Madivaru.
- **Hammerhead Point** - Popular dive site for Maldives liveaboards. Its proximity to deep waters lends the location the best chances of getting close to these magnificent creatures. Often considered to be the highlight of many Maldives liveboard trips.

North Ari Atoll

Ari Atoll (also called Alif or Alufu Atoll) is one of natural atolls of the Maldives. It is one of the biggest atolls and is located in the west of the archipelago. The almost rectangular alignment spreads the islands over an area of about 89x30 kilometres. It has been divided in two sections for administrative purposes, Northern Ari Atoll and Southern Ari Atoll.

Here are some possible sites you may visit:

- **Hafsa Thila** - Known for its grey reef shark cleaning station, this site is like fish soup. Pick the side with the current, drop in and swim through the fish until you see the pinnacle. If the sharks are already on top of the pinnacle then simply stay there mesmerised by the sharks in circle. Dog-tooth tuna, bonito and giant travelly shepherd the thousands of fusiliers, which creates quite a spectacle when the bonito finally decide to go for the kill and when the others follow suit you can feel the energy of thousands of fish accelerating in unison.
- **Maaya Thila** - Maaya Thila is one of the most famous dive sites in the Maldives and is known as a great spot for both daytime and night-time scuba diving. The marine life depends largely on the currents, which vary greatly; when the currents are not strong, it is an easy dive site, suitable for less experienced divers, but when currents are strong Maaya Thila is recommended for only advanced divers and they will need to use a surface balloon.
- Maaya Thila is most famous for the white tip reef sharks that can nearly always be seen here, both during the day and night. A night dive at Maaya Thila also allows divers to encounter moray eels, turtles, octopus and stonefish.



- **Gangehi Kandu** - Recommended only for advanced scuba divers, the Gangehi Kandu dive site is located in the northern part of the Ari Atoll. Currents here can also be an issue, and the site should only be dived when the currents are flowing into the site. Gangehi Kandu is known as one of the best dive sites in the Maldives for spotting sharks, including gray reef sharks, white tip reef sharks and the occasional leopard shark. Coral formations at this dive site are particularly colorful, and divers here can expect to see moray eels, nudibranch, mantis shrimp and trigger fish. Large pelagic species are also frequent visitors to the site.
- **Maalhos Thila** - Maalhos Thila is only suitable for experienced scuba divers because the best part of the dive site lies deeper than 25 metres. Maalhos Thila is an attractive dive spot, featuring several coral heads about 28 metres below the surface, all of which are covered with beautiful corals. Common visitors to the reef here include oriental sweetlips, white tip reef sharks and blue-lined snappers. Because of the strong currents at Maalhos Thila, a safety balloon must be deployed here to ensure the divers' safety.
- **Mushi Mas Mingili Thila (Fish Head)** - Fish Head, or Mushi Mas Mingili, is one of the most popular dive sites in Maldives. Prior to the site being declared an official Protected Marine Area by the Maldivian Government it was a common shark feeding spot among scuba divers. Marine life typically seen at Mushi Mas Mingili Thila includes gray reef sharks, white tips, napoleon wrasse, jacks and tuna.

South Ari Atoll

Ari Atoll (also called Alif or Alufu Atoll) is one of natural atolls of the Maldives. It is one of the biggest atolls and is located in the west of the archipelago. The almost rectangular alignment spreads the islands over an area of about 89x30 kilometres. It has been divided in two sections for administrative purposes, Northern Ari Atoll and Southern Ari Atoll.

Here are some possible sites you may visit:

- **Maamigili Beyru** - 11km of reef stretches along the south of Ari Atoll, which is home to whalesharks coming up for a feed. Thought to be a 'nursery' for whalesharks, the South of Ari Atoll is a place where you can find juvenile whalesharks all year round. Normally, if we find one, we snorkel with it but sometimes we get lucky and see them on the dive too!
- **Rangali Madivaru** - Madivaru is Dhivehi (Maldivian language) for Manta Point and Rangali Madivaru doesn't disappoint! As one of the best manta cleaning stations in the Maldives during the north east monsoon (December - April), this long stretch of reef starts at 8m going down to a sandy bottom at 24m - 30m. Teeming with cleaner wrasse as well as moray eels, scorpion leaf fish and lionfish. mantas come in for a clean after having a feed; and with the reef acting as one long cleaning station from 8m to 12m, this is a great site for getting photos of mantas with good light.
- **Rahdhiga Thila** - A beautiful pinnacle just 10 minutes from Rahdhiga Island and a popular stop for the 'BBQ on the Beach' under the stars. Rahdhiga Thila is impressive from the second you swim down to 30m to look at some grey reef sharks, then moving up to the overhangs with their beautiful dripping



blue, yellow and orange soft coral between 8m and 18m. Then finish the dive at 3m to 6m with some impressive table-top coral for a pleasantly relaxing safety stop.

- **Broken Rock** - Named for a large broken rock at the center of this dive site, Broken Rock is home to a beautiful array of soft and hard coral formations that attract a wide variety of reef. Where the rock is broken, there is a channel that divers can swim through, giving the dive an interesting dimension. Broken Rock varies in depth from 40 to 100 feet. Sometimes, there can be very strong currents at Broken Rock, so divers should be cautious to avoid being thrown against the coral. Among the marine life often seen at Broken Rock, common sightings include the puffer fish, trigger fish, moray eels and napoleon wrasse.
- **Kudarah Thila** - Declared a "Protected Marine Area" by the Maldivian government, Kudarah Thila is a popular dive site which enjoys many incoming currents. Coral reef formations at Kudarah Thila are bright and colorful, including a variety of soft and hard corals. Thila means "Pinnacle" in Dhivehi, and at Kudarah Thila there are actually four pinnacles, which can be all visited in one dive. A swim-through at the south-east corner of the dive site makes this a particularly popular dive, as does the rich variety of marine life, which typically includes trumpet fish, snapper, gobies, dartfish, oriental sweetlips and groupers. A little further away from the reef, divers are likely to see gray reef sharks, napoleon fish and sea turtles.
- **Pannettone (Kalhahandi Kandu)** - Kalhahandi Kandu has earned the nickname Pannettone from the many Italian divers who believe it resembles the traditional Italian fruitcake. It is an attractive dive site, recommended mainly for advanced scuba divers, except for when the currents are not strong. There are some spectacular coral formations here, featuring a variety of soft and hard coral species, which attract a wide selection of fish including angelfish, basslets, butterfly fish, scorpion fish, trigger fish, puffer fish and . The corals here are in good condition and weather conditions at Pannettone mean the dive site can be explored year-round.

South Male Atoll

The atoll of South Male is separated from North Male by the Vaadhoo Kandu channel. Channel diving is a major feature of diving in South Male. These channels, whilst currents can be challenging, do bring with it an abundance of nutrients to feed and attract all types of marine life.

Here are some possible sites you may visit:

- **Kandooma Thila** - A magnificent long thin pinnacle in the middle of a channel between Cocoa Corner and Kandooma Island Resort, this is one of the few channels in the Maldives where it doesn't matter which way the current is going - it will be a spectacular dive! Grey reef sharks and eagle rays are likely companions here. Due to its position in the channel, this is a dive site for advanced divers who understand the current. Magnificent overhangs with draping colourful soft coral and shark cleaning stations await those who dive this challenging but rewarding dive site.
- **Kuda Giri Wreck** - This beautiful 30m long wreck lies along the side of a small pinnacle in South Male Atoll, sloping from 18m down to 33m at the stern. A



great dive for macro lovers with the wreck having leaf fish, false-cheeked pipefish and other interesting little creatures to entertain. Explore the wreck and then work your way over to the shallow pinnacle that has an interesting overhang and little swim-throughs as well as a good coral garden at 5m where you can finish your safety stop.

- **Cocoa Corner (Cocoa Thila)** - Cocoa Corner is a dive site that can be explored in several different ways and with the right current and conditions, it's is the best shark show around Male Atoll. Many dive guides consider crossing from Cocoa Corner to Kandooma Thila. With the right current, divers begin the dive from Cocoa Corner and while maintaining a depth of 25 to 29 metres, they swim across the current while parallel to the edge at 40 metres. This gives a natural reference that divers are maintaining the correct position while crossing to the Thila and divers are not taken too far inside the channel. The Thila lies in the middle of the channel about 15 metres from the channel edge. Here, divers will see heaps of Grey Reef Sharks from big mother sharks to newborn babies patrolling the edge of the channel together. Eagle Rays and schooling Jack Fish are also common at the beginning of the Thila. By the time divers reach the Thila, their bottom time should be running out and the best thing to do is to swim to the top of the Thila and continue diving in shallower waters. A safety balloon is a must at Cocoa Corner and divers should be prepared to make an open water safety stop.
- **Guraidhoo Kandhu South** is sometimes also known as Guraidhoo Corner. Currents at Guraidhoo Kandhu are strong, making this a dive site appropriate only for advanced, experienced scuba divers. Gray reef sharks are common visitors at Guriadhoo Kandhu when the currents are incoming, along with several pelagic species and eagle rays. Divers should be very cautious at this dive site, as the currents can pull you away from the reef and there is often underwater turbulence.

North Male Atoll

North Male Atoll is one of the most developed atolls in terms of hotel and resort development. There are at least 20 resort islands operating in the North Male Atoll. It is also home to some excellent diving spots.

Here are some possible sites you may visit:

- **Lankan Manta Point** - Lying along the channel reef of Lankanfushi (now Paradise Island Resort), this large block of coral is home to hundreds of cleaner wrasse. During the south west monsoon (May to November) the current runs from west to east, so the mantas feed on the outside of the eastern side of the Atolls. After they have had a feed, they come into cleaning stations such as Lankan Manta Point and get cleaned by the cleaner wrasse; a perfect chance for divers to get up close and personal with these majestic mantas.
- **Banana Reef** was the first dive site to be discovered in the Maldives continues to be one of the most popular. The dive, which ranges in depth from 5 to 30 meters, has several interesting characteristics including a pinnacle and some overhangs. Coral formations here are prolific and colorful, attracting an extensive variety of fish, including squirrelfish, bannerfish and oriental sweetlips. Currents can be strong at times around the reef, with occasional



turbulence occurring around the overhangs. As such, the use of a surface balloon is recommended.

- **Kuda Haa** is a dramatic pinnacle, or thila, dive, which is widely considered one of the highlights of diving in the Maldives. Diving at Kuda Haa is at its best when the currents are not strong, when it is easy to navigate between the two parts of the pinnacle. Marine life to be expected at Kuda Haa is diverse and plentiful, including many macro species, including nudibranchs, flatworms, leaf fish and frogfish.