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GUIDE: MALDIVES BY SUPERYACHT

Peeking out of the Indian Ocean, everyone knows the Maldives are the postcard-perfect beach destination. For a slightly different approach, you could try exploring them by superyacht

by Linda Cartlidge

Pictures courtesy of Asia Pacific Superyachts Maldives and Dusit Thani Maldives



Superyacht MY Legacy at Kuda Bandos island

The Maldives, one of the best and most fascinating travel destinations in the world, is fast emerging as a world favorite for a superyacht cruising journey.

Arriving at the Maldives Archipelago, superyachts will encounter groups of 26 atolls in entirely natural formation, with only a small number inhabited, making up the chain of islands waiting to be discovered. The flat islands are formed from coral layers, the highest point rarely being more than 6 feet above sea level. Located in the Indian Ocean 670 km south-west of Sri Lanka and covering an area of 300 km, they are protected from monsoon devastation by barrier reefs and rarely suffer from major storms.

The archipelago's miniscule coral islets of deep blue seas offer fantastic cruising adventures. The waterways provide the best and most natural of transport and overhead weather generally picture perfect - sunlit days, breezy nights, balmy mornings and iridescent sunsets.

Long stretches of world-famous sugar-white beaches provide sanctuary to countless sea birds while extensive coral reefs host a seemingly endless variety of exotic fish and marine life. The islands are a waystation in the annual migration of whale sharks and manta rays and throughout the Maldives, whale sharks are found patrolling very close to the surface. This makes the islands a famed and, arguably, ideal destination for snorkelers in any season. Speaking of which, the Maldives is pleasantly warm year-round, varying from 25 to 30 degrees Celsius.

With a superyacht as homebase, the Maldives reveals all of the above in a way that a mere visit to one of the resorts cannot - unless the resort itself has a decent yacht at its disposal. Below is a sample itinerary for those with access to just such a vessel.



1st Day: Kuda Bandos - Situated in Malé Atoll Kuda Bandos is a breathtaking island a shout away from the main island, Bandos. It is ideal for a first day private sunset beach picnic after reef snorkeling and swimming in a clear blue lagoon, as your boat's needs are all taken care of.

The largest fish on the planet, the whale shark (*Rhincodon Typus*) can grow up to 40 feet in length and is a fascinating creature to behold. With no known predators (except humans) and a completely peaceful nature, they are huge, harmless and sublime. Despite its incredible size the whale shark feeds, like its namesake (the first part that is), almost entirely on plankton and small fish. They are most plentiful near Baa Atoll through July and August, when plankton is at the highest level. Because they pose no real threat to humans, diving with these gentle giants in the Maldives has become a favorite adventure. Other gigantic fish often seen in the area include manta rays, humphead wrasse (Napoleon wrasse) and reef sharks. Large sea turtles are relatively common.

Arriving Superyachts start their adventure at the capital island of Malé, lying north and located among the miniscule coral islets of the Maldives' nature-rich archipelago. Asia Pacific Superyachts (APS) Maldives provides visiting vessels a wide range of services with a head office in Malé and branches in the Northern Part of HA, Uligan (North Thiladhunmathi Atoll) and the Southern Part of S. Gan (Addu Atoll). Mohamed Hameed, founder of APS Maldives and a multi-generational resident, and APS director, Arif Abdul Samad, offer the above sample itinerary for an extraordinary trip on your own yacht or on one of their charter yachts.

Major changes are being implemented to support conservation and preservation efforts throughout many of the beautiful areas in the Maldives. Among the important changes are those in the diving regulations at Hanifaru Bay at Baa Atoll, outlined under the "Hanifaru Management Plan" of the Baa Atoll Conservation Program. A popular international dive location, the change at Hanifaru Bay from diving and snorkeling to 'only snorkeling' was made to minimize the potentially negative impact from divers on the manta rays and whale sharks; however, diving is still permitted on the outer area of Hanifaru Bay and the rest of Baa Atoll.



Rihiveli Baby Island

Changes like these brought about the coveted distinction of the entire Baa Atoll being declared a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve – a distinction awarded to an area of natural excellence recognized for its unique harmony between man and nature.

Many resorts are implementing practices to protect the reefs and marine life due to dire warnings of future danger and the Dusit Thani Maldives is one of the leaders in sustainable resort development in the Maldives; geared toward achieving a carbon-neutral programme and implementing structures to support the live coral reefs.



The APS Maldives 'Sailfish' at Kuda Bandos

Supporting superyachts in the Maldives and a member of the Association of Yacht Support Services (AYSS), APS Maldives founder Mohamed Hameed welcomes new arrivals to join past APS superyacht clients. These include M/y Ambrosia; M/y Annaeva and S/y Squall, to name just a few.



Snorkeling at Dusit Thani

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