Things to see, do, eat and enjoy. And a few handy hints.

The ultimate ‘flop and drop’ and honeymoon destination, the Maldives was once the playground for only the rich and famous. Now, however, this destination has become much more affordable, and very accessible through a connecting flight from Singapore or Dubai.

The main attraction of this collection of tiny atolls is the amazing overwater bungalow accommodation, the colourful marine life and corals, and of course that crystal clear blue water.

The Maldives is an archipelago of 1190 islands, straddling the equator and scattered like gems across the Indian Ocean, with palm fringed islands, sparkling white beaches, turquoise lagoons, and fabulous coral reefs. Most resorts are located on their own island, many having beachfront, or overwater bungalows. The lifestyle is completely relaxed; here you can sunbathe, swim, snorkel, scuba, visit nearby ‘deserted’ islands, or undertake sightseeing and fishing expeditions. The marine life is stunning and you’ll never tire of the numerous species of colourful fish.

**Best Time To Go**

The Maldives enjoys a tropical climate with a year-round average of 24 - 30 degrees Celsius and with a water temperature of 27 degrees Celsius. The ‘winter’ season is May to October, and wet weather and storms are experienced in June and July. The summer is dry and hot with light breezes and extends from November to April.

**Cruising & Sailing:** Given the Maldives is more sea than land, sailing seems an obvious activity. Your hotel can organise a day of island hopping for you. Check out some of the other islands surrounding your resort, have lunch on a deserted island, do some snorkelling, or just lie on the deck, enjoying the beautiful blue water.

**Diving:** Diving is an extremely popular pastime in the Maldives – there are over a 1000 species of fish, over 3000 coral reefs and high visibility, up to 50 metres. Almost all resorts offer diving facilities, and these are generally of a high standard. You’ll be able to get training from basic to advanced level. The Maldives is home to ‘Fish Head’, one of the world’s most famous dive sites. It has caves, multi-level ledges, sea fans and black corals.

**Fishing:** An obvious choice for something to do, given the prolific sea life in the area. Try the big game fishing, or a night fishing expedition for something different.

**Surfing:** The Maldives is a mecca for surf enthusiasts. Massive swells are created by the southwest monsoon, usually between June and September. If you particularly want to stay near a surf break, make sure you let your travel consultant know, so they can recommend the best resorts for accessing these breaks. Many of the resorts can be over an hour boat ride away from a good surf break. The best surf breaks are found around the North Malé Atoll.

**Spa Treatments:** You’ll find a Spa at just about every resort, and they are of a world-class standard. Try the traditional Maldivian sand massage which is used to cure muscle and joint pains, have a massage using the Maldivian virgin coconut oil or the local gandhakolhi leaf which is used to treat minor aches and pains.

**Seaplane Transfers**

Seaplane transfers are an amazing experience and give you a birdseye view of the islands. However there are a couple of things you need to take into consideration. If the resort you’ve chosen has transfers by seaplane, make sure you check your flight arrival and departure times. Seaplanes only operate during daylight hours, so if you arrive late in the afternoon, you’ll need to spend the night in Malé and transfer to the resort the following morning. When you are departing your resort, try to return home from Malé in the afternoon, rather than early in the morning, otherwise you’ll need to stay in Malé overnight the night prior to catch your flight. Seaplanes also have strict limits on luggage, so if you’ve flown business class on your international flights, you may have more luggage than allowable on the seaplane flight.

**Getting Around**

Malé is the capital, and taxis are available here. To get to your resort, you will need to catch a traditional dhoni boat, speedboat, seaplane or a domestic flight. Usually your hotel organises this for you.

**Maldives Tips & Tricks**

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Making travel arrangements. Please check your specific visa requirements with Maldives. A 30 day visa will be issued on arrival.

Visas

All-inclusive packages help reduce the cost (see next page).

Resorts

All resorts occupy their own island, and you’ll be staying on that island for the duration of your stay. So research the facilities, dining options, food quality and service standards properly, to make sure your island dream doesn’t become your worst nightmare. The quality of resorts in the Maldives is generally very high, so this won’t be too big a concern, but it’s best to check the resort you choose has the mix of entertainment, sporting activities and dining options that best suit your personal choices.

Money

The local currency is Maldivian Rufiyaa - generally used on Malé only. Credit cards and US dollars are all that are accepted at resorts. Please note Australian dollars cannot be exchanged, so make sure you do this before you leave Australia.

Tipping & Etiquette

There is no need to tip in the Maldives as a 10% service charge is added to every bill. However staff earn very low wages, and if you experience excellent service, you may wish to show your appreciation. Also, due to the steady stream of European and US tourists who are accustomed to tipping, the practice is starting to become more expected by staff.

Islam is the major religion of the Maldives. Although the resorts take a relaxed attitude to their guests, modesty is required in restaurants, and in Malé conservative dress is expected. Topless sunbathing is against the law.

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Despite Islam being the main religion, few restrictions apply to guests, and staff earn very low wages, so tipping is expected by staff. Nevertheless, due to the influx of European and US tourists, the practice is starting to become more expected by staff.

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Alcohol

You are not allowed to bring alcohol into the Maldives, so forget the duty free unless you are picking it up when you arrive home. Alcohol is heavily taxed, so prices are extremely high.

All-inclusive packages help reduce the cost (see next page).

Board & All-Inclusive Packages

A few resorts include all meals and drinks as standard as part of the price, however most only offer breakfast with the room, and the option to take up a meal package is additional. Half board means breakfast and dinner (sometimes a choice of lunch or dinner), full board refers to breakfast, lunch and dinner, and all-inclusive packages include all meals and alcoholic/non-alcoholic drinks, and often water sport activities. Dining is very expensive in the Maldives, and being a Muslim country, alcoholic drinks are also expensive. So if you like to enjoy a few drinks while on holiday, an all-inclusive package usually works out much more cost effective. However, there are a few things to be aware of when taking a board or all-inclusive package. Every resort differs with its terms and conditions. Some include cocktails, others don’t. Some have a set all-inclusive drinks menu and anything outside this is additional. Some resorts only allow you to eat at certain food outlets at the resort, and a surcharge applies to go elsewhere in the resort. To make sure you’re fully aware of what you do and don’t get.

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Overwater Villas

The most indelible image of the Maldives is the overwater accommodation. This is generally the most expensive room option in the resorts. There are a few things to weigh up if you decide to stay in this type of room. Firstly, not all overwater rooms offer steps down to the water. Therefore, you’ll need to walk all the way back to the beach to go for a swim. So always check if this is the case. Secondly, some resorts offer glass floors for viewing the fish below, others don’t. If this is a ‘must have’ for you, make sure you let your travel consultant know, as this will limit the choice of resorts. Finally, many people don’t realise the sound of water lapping all day and all night against the foundations of the bungalow can be quite loud. Some people find it soothing and like a ‘white noise’, others find it annoying and have difficulty sleeping. So consider this before booking your overwater accommodation. If you love the beach, the beachfront bungalows have the sand at your front door and have fantastic views, and are usually significantly less expensive.

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Relaxing, low-tech holiday a little on the boring side, unless they love watersports.

Visas

Each person must carry a passport with at least 6 months validity from the date of arrival into the Maldives. A 30 day visa will be issued on arrival. Please check your specific visa requirements with the appropriate embassies or consulates before making travel arrangements.

Weddings & Honeymoons

Couples from other countries can’t be legally married in the Maldives, but they do perform many mock and renewal ceremonies. Most resorts organise wedding packages, however they won’t suit those on a tight budget.

The Maldives is a popular destination for Australian honeymooners. Most resorts offer honeymoon packages with lots of extra romantic bonuses, and these resorts are excellent at creating a romantic environment for their honeymooning guests.
Resorts For Families
These are just a few of our preferred resorts for families. Ask a Cherry consultant for options that specifically suit your requirements.

- **Holiday Inn Resort Kandooma Maldives**: Kandooma Fushi, South Malé Atoll. Well priced resort with kids club, all-inclusive packages available.
- **LUX* Maldives**: Dhidhoofinolhu, South Ari Atoll. Kids and teens club, lots of dining options, free water and land sports.
- **Anantara Dhigu Resort & Spa**: Dhigufinolhu, South Malé Atoll. Surfing school, cooking classes, kids club, dine around options available, access to sister property Anantara Veli.
- **Centara Grand Island Resort & Spa**: Maldives, Machchafushi, South Malé Atoll. Ultimate family friendly, all-inclusive resort. All packages include breakfast, lunch, dinner, beverages and selected excursions. Great value for families and kids and teens clubs.

Resorts for Honeymoons & Special Occasions
These are just a few of our preferred resorts for honeymooners and couples. Ask a Cherry consultant for options that specifically suit your requirements.

- **Kuramathi Island Resort**: Kuramathi Island, Rasdhoo Atoll. Large resort with lots of facilities and dining options, all-inclusive packages available.
- **Centara Ras Fushi Resort & Spa**: Ras Fushi, North Malé Atoll. Honeymoon packages, swim up bar, evening entertainment. Reasonably priced.
- **Vivanta by Taj-Coral Reef**: Maldives, Hembadhu Island, North Malé Atoll. Smaller design hotel, great house reef for snorkelling, all-inclusive packages available, honeymoon bonuses.
- **Baros Maldives**: North Malé Atoll. Very romantic resort, beautiful Spa, perfect couples retreat.
- **Anantara Veli Resort & Spa**: Veligandu, South Malé Atoll. Adults only resort, dine around options available, access to sister property Anantara Dhigu, honeymoon bonuses.

Resorts for Surfing
These resorts are close to a surf break, and some have surf schools.

- **Anantara Veli Resort & Spa**
- **Anantara Dhigu Resort & Spa**
- **Naladhu Maldives**
- **Six Senses Laamu**
- **Sheraton Maldives Full Moon Resort & Spa**
- **Four Seasons Kuda Huraa**
- **Centara Ras Fushi** (surf breaks are around 15 minutes away from this resort, but they do offer packages to get there).

A special thanks to Asia Escape Holidays for their contribution to this content.