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# INFLIGHT

ISSUE 01 | 2015 **MAGAZINE**



## Maldivian Cowries

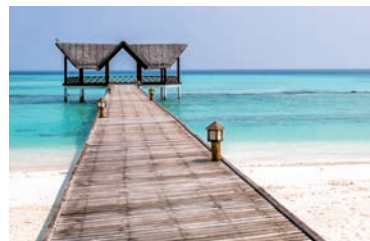
Mapping the  
Maldives

Thousand Island  
Adventures

Manta  
Snorkel



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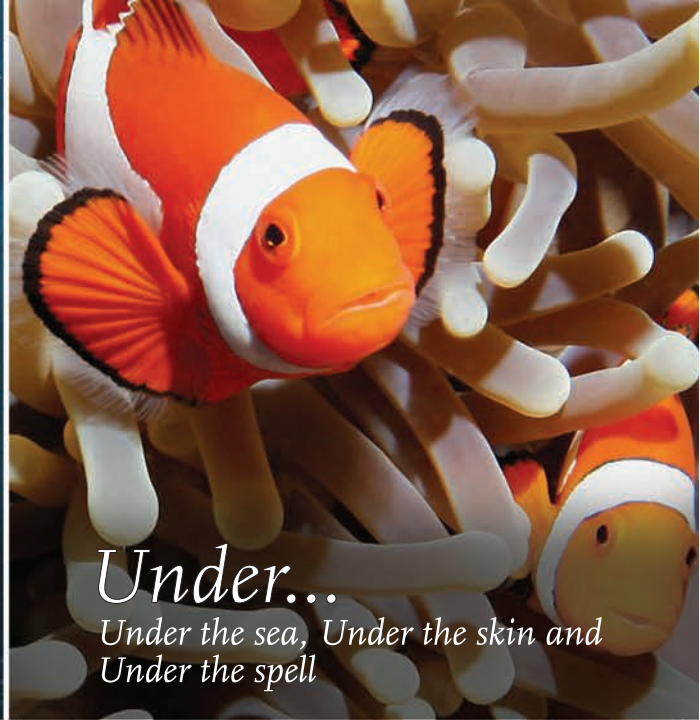
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## EDITOR'S NOTE



Welcome to this new edition of Inflight!

As you fly over the emerald isles and the turquoise lagoons of the Maldives, and if you have some time away from the mesmerizing view from the window, take a peek into the history, culture and the vast horizon of activities that you can enjoy during your stay in the Maldives.

In this issue we bring you pieces written by well-heeled writers, who are sharing their first-hand experiences having lived here.

Inflight takes a ride with pilot Andrew Farr on his journey from Canada to the Maldives and his experience of flying over the Maldives the last eight years. Experienced journalist Sarah Harvey then dips into the crystal clear lagoons to share her experience of snorkeling with the majestic Manta Rays.

Meanwhile, Thomas Pickard spends time together with Tim Godfrey, who has been busy compiling the 6th Edition of the Atlas of the Maldives. Tim's work has been invaluable for travelers, divers and sailors alike.

For our feature article, Fathmath Ijaza looks at the significant role played by Maldivian cowrie shells in the country's history.

We hope you have a memorable holiday in the Maldives and look forward to seeing you again. Enjoy your flight!

**Adheel Ismail**  
Editor

## AUTHORS



Thomas Pickard is a freelance photographer and writer who lived in the Maldives for two-years, producing over twenty articles on the country.



Sarah Harvey is a British travel journalist working in the Maldives and Europe. She is the founder of Manta Media, writes for various international publications and is shortly to release a new guidebook.



Fathmath Ijaza is a freelance writer who has written for several magazines and publications both in English and Dhivehi, spanning a period of over eight years.



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MAGAZINE ISSUE 01 | 2015

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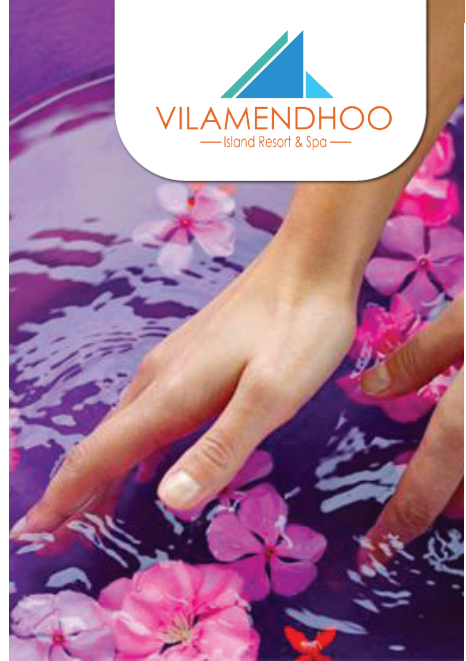
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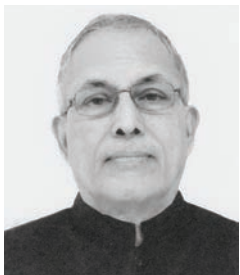
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## *Greetings from the Chairman*

Welcome on board!

We are delighted to have you on board with us. Thank you for giving us the opportunity to be your chosen means of transfer to your resort.

As you embark on your journey in the Maldives, we hope that we can contribute to making your trip an unforgettable and unique one.

Your safety, security and satisfaction are our highest priority. We continue to strive to set new standards of excellence in all three. Our safety focus is in three main areas: safety leadership focused on prevention, staff training and risk management. This three-tiered program is designed to maintain continuous improvement in safety practices at all levels of the business.

Our people help to make us the most unique airline in the world. Over 1,000 staff help make your journey punctual, seamless and memorable. Over half our staff comprises local Maldivians, with the remaining coming from 20 different nationalities. Our people are driven by their continuous endeavor to consistently deliver an unbeatable customer experience. We understand that how we interact and responsibly connect with our passengers and customers, in the air and on the ground, is a key factor in building good and lasting relationships.

On our flight path, we promise you, and all stakeholders, that we shall strive to beat expectations. We are committed to acting sustainably in everyone's interest and to the environment we serve. We hope you have an enjoyable flight, on our seaplane which is an intrinsic part of the Enthralling Maldives Experience!

Best wishes,  
**Richard B. Saldanha**



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## Welcome on board!

Welcome to Trans Maldivian Airways, the largest seaplane operator in the world and your best seat to enjoy the idyllic beauty of the Maldives!

This year marks the completion of 25 glorious years of TMA's service to this country. Back when we started, there was no convenient way to reach the island that you might be going to today. It involved a long boat ride, usually in rough seas, with most tourists reaching their holiday destination sea-sick! It was then that our visionary founders decided that there had to be a simpler way to do this – first with helicopters and then further improving the offering with seaplanes that provide amongst the most unique and breathtaking experiences in the world. On this 25th anniversary, our achievement were recognized by the World Travel Awards, which declared us as the World's Leading Seaplane Operator.

To continue on our promise of providing the best seaplane experience in the world, we are the first airline in Maldives and possibly the first airline in the world to comply, in one go, with the regulations for (1) the ISO 9001: 2008 – Quality Management System (2) ISO 14001:2004 – Environment Management System, and (3) BS OHSAS 18001: 2007 – Occupational Health & Safety Management System (OHSAS) certifications. Together, these comprise the PAS 99 certification for BSI Integrated Management System. Needless to say, our employees and partner resorts take pride in being a part of TMA's forward-looking, customer-centric vision.

We continue to invest in the ground transportation experience to provide a quick and hassle-free experience and in the terminals and the lounges to ensure that you have an "airport-waiting" experience like no other. We are changing the livery on our aircraft, along with the cabin interiors, to provide you with an even more comfortable and refreshing journey. Making these modifications for a 46-aircraft (and growing!) fleet, and an infrastructure that transports ~1 million passengers can be daunting, especially while continuing to maintain our high levels of service. Our over 1,000 employees are keeping to this task night and day.

We hope it will be a truly memorable experience of the "Sun, Sand, Sea & Seaplane" during your holiday!

**A.U.M. Fawzy**  
Chief Executive Officer

# maldives

*beyond the Sun, Sand and Sea*

## Geography

The Maldives consists of approximately 1,190 coral islands grouped in a double chain of 27 atolls, spread over roughly 90,000 square kilometers, making the country one of the most unique destinations in the world. The islands stretch over a distance of 800 km from north to south.

## Climate

The temperature of Maldives ranges between 24°C and 33° C throughout the year. Although the humidity is relatively high, the constant sea breeze helps to keep the air moving. The average sea temperature is around 26°C.

## Population

The population of Maldives has increased rapidly during the last few decades. However with a population of approximately 360,000, the country still remains one of the smallest independent nations in the world.

## Religion

Maldivians are devout Muslims and rigorously follow the basic tenets of Islam. The Islamic Center which accommodates more than 5,000 worshippers dominates the skyline of the capital city Male' with its shining golden dome and minaret. Several mosques are dispersed throughout the capital and each inhabited island is graced with at least one or two mosques where the people attend to their daily prayers.

## History

Archeological remains excavated in different parts of the country prove that people were living here





as early as third century BC. The Maldives and its people are mentioned in several mariners' logs and records of naval expeditions by the Chinese and the Arabs and later the British and other European explorers.

## Culture

A proud history and rich culture evolved from the first settlers who were from various parts of the world travelling the seas in ancient times. The Maldives has been a melting pot of different culture as people from different parts of the world came here and settled down. Some of the local music and dance for instance resemble African influences, while other cultures and traditions reflect East Asian and South Asian characteristics and traits.

## Language

Dhivehi spoken throughout the Maldives is a language belonging to the Indo-Iranian group of languages. The language is spoken only in the Maldives and Minicoy Island in the Lakshadweep Atoll (India) to the north of the Maldives. The present script, Thaana was introduced in the late 16th century and is written from right to left. English is widely spoken by Maldivians and visitors can easily make themselves understood getting around the capital Male'. In the resorts, a variety of languages are spoken by the staff including English, German, French, Italian, Japanese and Chinese.

## Capital Island

Male', which has a total area of 5.8 km<sup>2</sup> is the capital of the country. It is the center of administration and the hub of trade and commerce. More than 150,000 people live in Male'.

## Economy

In the last quarter of the twentieth century, the economy changed from the age-old traditional system based on fisheries and agriculture to a modern economy that rode on the success of the newly established tourism industry and a modernized and mechanized fishing industry.

Maldivians enjoy the highest GDP per capita in South Asia today.

## Currency

The local currency is Rufiyaa. At the time of publication, the exchange rate is pegged at MVR 15.42 to a US Dollar. If you are heading to a resort, you need not worry about local currency as all your bills at the resort can be paid by US Dollar, Euro or any other European currency. All major credit cards are also accepted at the resorts. However, if you are visiting Male' or any of the local islands, you may need to hold local currency for purchases you may wish to make.

## Education

Maldives boasts one of the highest literacy rates in the world with 91% of the country's population being able to read and write. Educational

standards are among the highest in the region and schools follow the British system of education.

## Health

The Indhira Gandhi Memorial Hospital (IGMH) in Male' is the state run general hospital in the country providing a high standard of medical care. ADK Hospital is one of the private health care facility in the country among several other private hospitals and clinics. Most resorts have a resident doctor and a decompression chamber is within easy reach in case of a diving emergency.

## Business Hours

The working week in Maldives begins on Sunday and ends on Thursday. Government offices are open from 08:00 to 15:00 hours and the private sector from 09:00 to 17:00 hours. Most offices in the private sector open for business on Saturdays.



Weekend falls on Friday and Saturday.

## Communication

All resorts offer IDD telephone services. Mobile telephone services in the country are offered by Ooredoo Maldives and Dhiraagu Telecom. Both companies have roaming agreements with various operators across the globe, which will enable you to use your home number while in Maldives. All the resorts in Maldives offer Internet services. Some resorts offer broadband connections in the room while others offer Wi-Fi zones at key locations on the island.

## Shopping

The northern end of Chaandhanee Magu in Male' is the place to be if you are looking for souvenirs to take home. A range of batik sarongs and wraparounds, wooden handicrafts, candles and other knick knacks are available from the shops

lining the street. You will also be able to find some souvenir items if you visit the neighboring islands near your resort. Lookout for genuine Maldivian hand painted t-shirts and lacquered boxes, miniature dhonis and reed mats if you really want to take a piece of Maldives with you as a memento.

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## Local Time +5 GMT



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# Mapping *the* maldives

BY: THOMAS PICKARD

With 1,190 islands dotted over some 90,000 square kilometres of the Indian Ocean, the Maldives is a destination that clearly requires an atlas to get around. Enter Tim Godfrey, founder of Atoll Editions and publisher of *Atlas of the Maldives*, a quick reference guide for travellers and divers.

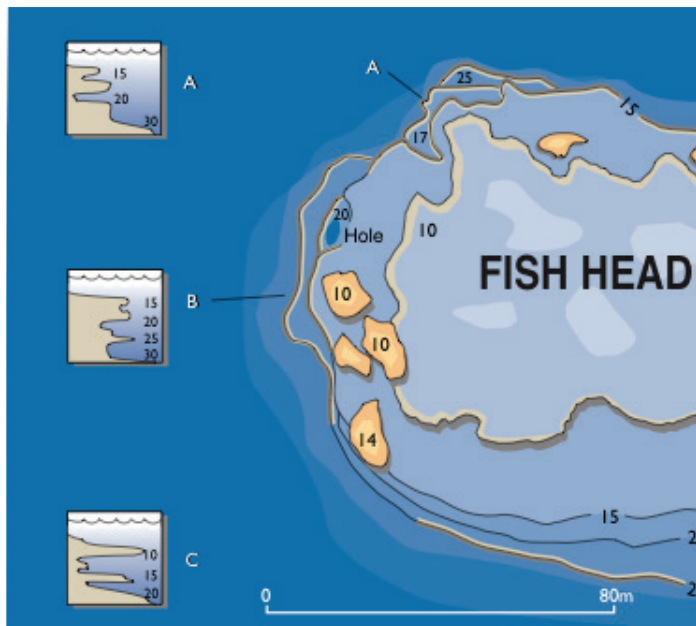
In between compiling updates for the 6th edition of the *Atlas of the Maldives*, I catch up with Tim for this interview.

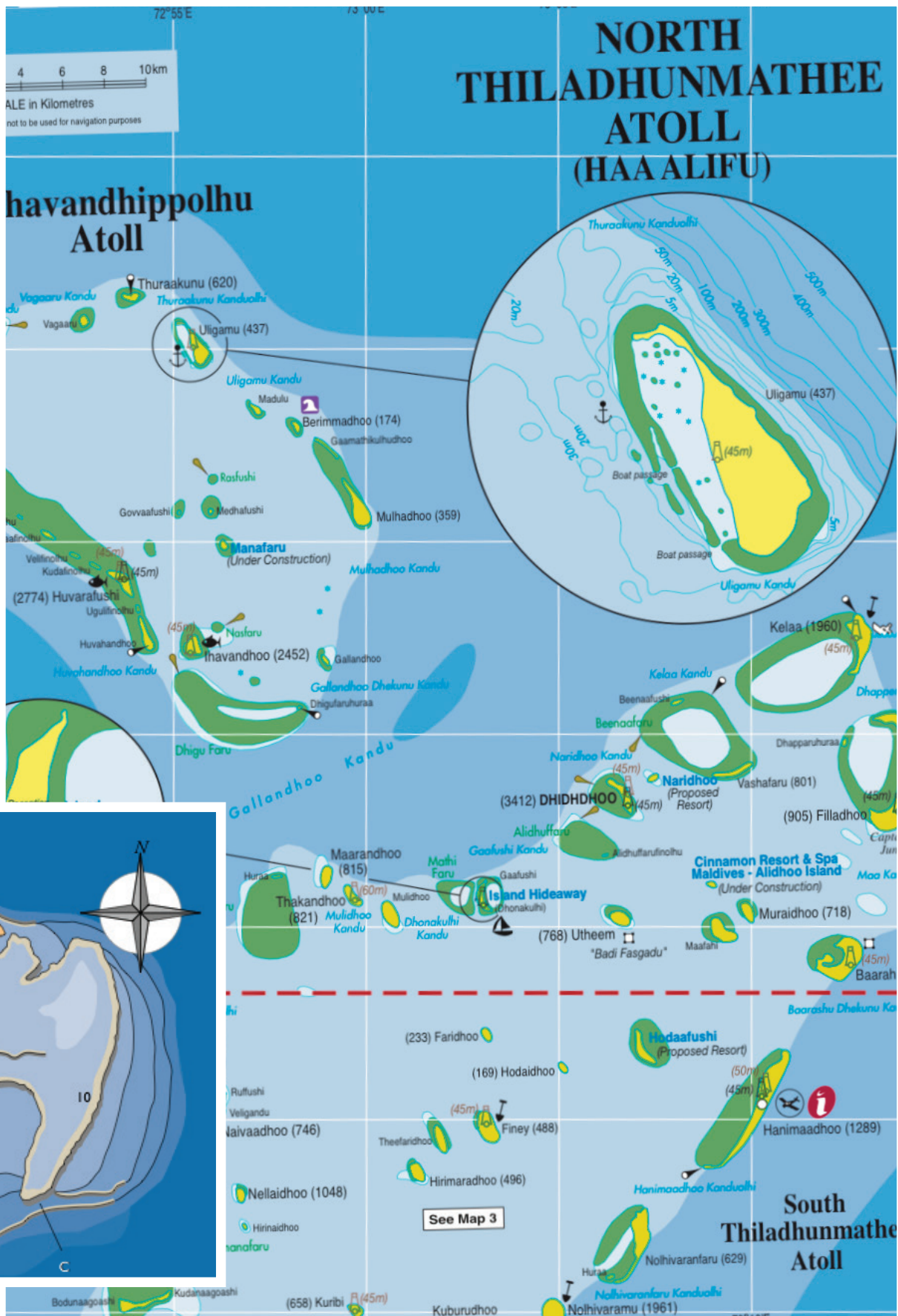
## What is your background Tim and how did it lead to you creating the atlas of the Maldives?

During the early 1980s I worked as a journalist covering news events and looking for stories around the Pilbara and Kimberley regions, in the far north western corner of Australia. During my time off I became actively involved in scuba diving. One thing led to another and in 1986 I found my way to the Maldives working first as a barman, then as a diving instructor with Sea Explorer's based out of Male'.

It was during my time in the Maldives, that I realised there was an opportunity to combine my professional background as a journalist, with my love of scuba diving and the marine environment and start publishing books on the Maldives. Once I had made this decision, I decided my first objective would be to write a comprehensive dive and historical guide to the Maldives, which was released as *Dive Maldives, A Guide to the Maldives Archipelago*.

There were two particular challenges with creating *Dive Maldives*. Firstly, there was no real atlas of the Maldives back then, so in many respects the





atlas evolved out of necessity, as I needed to find my way around the archipelago without getting lost. Secondly, finding and creating the maps of the underwater dive sites was complicated by not knowing exactly where each dive site was. Fortunately I had great support from numerous locals and various dive companies and with their help, I began hand drawing maps of the dive sites. I later scanned these maps and drew them on a computer before finding a cartographer, who created the final maps for Dive Maldives. I now had a proven cartographer and a growing catalogue of information on Maldives locations, which I'd been collecting for 10 years. Publishing an atlas seemed a logical step to help me recoup my investment. So in 1996 I established Atoll Editions and published my first two books - Dive Maldives and Malways, Maldives Island Directory. In subsequent editions I renamed the atlas to Atlas of the Maldives.

### **What existed prior to Malways, Maldives Island Directory?**

The British Admiralty Charts existed, but these were primarily designed for navigation and not that helpful as a quick reference guide for travellers and divers. While there was a lot of additional information that could be included on the charts, such as atoll lights, telecommunication towers, fishing islands, shipwrecks, resort names and so on, the main features I wanted to see were more island and reef names, as well as underwater reef locations. On the whole, these were not really well represented.

### **Can you explain how you create an atlas of such a complicated coastline, dotted with so many islands, lagoons and sand bars?**

There were many sources that went into the first edition of the atlas. I owe much to my excellent cartographer and am indebted to the valuable information provided by Maldivian Government officials, dive instructors, businessmen and local islanders.

A set of black and white photographs of the Maldives from a British aerial survey in the 1960s really helped clarify the boundaries between islands and reefs. Some satellite sheet maps, new at that time, clearly showed the outlines of islands



and many new underwater reefs and unnamed thilas. These reefs and some of the features such as communication towers and navigation lights, had to be ground-truthed and cross-referenced for accuracy. Ground-truthing and cross-referencing meant a person needed to go a particular site and ensure that the location of say a communication tower, was in fact in the right spot for a given set of latitude and longitude coordinates. Though this is a time consuming component of creating the maps, it was essential for accuracy.



**What challenges did you encounter with creating the first edition of the atlas?**

As a diving instructor on a safari boat in the more remote areas of the Maldives, I had to rely totally on the dhoni captains to inform me where I was and to ensure I was dropped on the correct reef. They showed great skill in using island triangulation to determine the location of various thilas and other features, which I needed to locate for the atlas. As good fishing spots often make good dive sites, I would talk with local fisherman and ask them where their favourite fishing spot

was. The fishermen were very helpful and would often provide additional information such as the type of fish they caught, which I would add to my notes about the dive site.

Another challenge was ensuring the island and reef names with the same or similar spellings, were in fact correct. There are four islands with the name Madivaru, another three with Maduvvari. Then there are all the various Finolhu's, Huraa's, Faru's and Fushi' that go with the name. As an outsider this was quite confusing and I knew I

needed to get it right for the atlas. I was fortunate to meet Mr Mohammed Ibraheem Loutifi from the Centre for Linguistic and Historical Studies. Not only did he provide the correct spelling for the islands, which confused me, but he took me to his home and over many years, graciously educated me in the natural history, geography and history of the Maldives. I am indebted to him for sharing his knowledge of the Maldives and kick starting my interest in the sciences. Lastly, I'm really happy that I made the decision to keep the traditional island name of islands, which were developed into resorts. Over time, resort names invariably change, but a traditional island name will always remain constant.

**Lots of people use your atlas these days, from pilots to fishermen to divers, have you received any interesting feedback about the atlas over the years?**

I get a lot of feedback from divers and boat captains, but also the sea plane pilots who often use the maps in the atlas to take a 'visual' on their planes position while flying. The most interesting feedback I received was years ago, from a pilot who set out on a special charter to an island south of the equator, on the wrong course. Turns out, we had accidentally marked the latitude south of the equator, as being north. Needless to say, that was quickly changed in the next edition!

**What keeps bringing you back to the Maldives?**

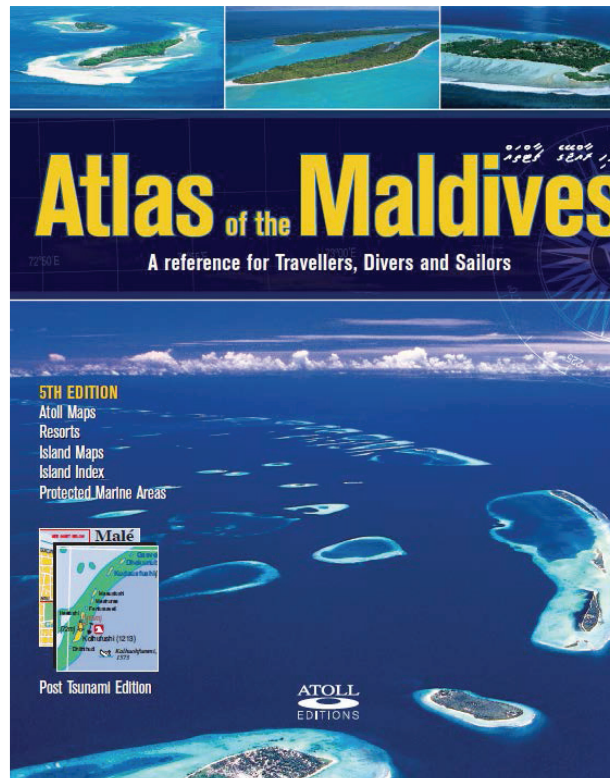
New challenges really. These days it is much easier to generate topographical maps from satellite imagery, but now the emphasis for me is on the marine topography. Marine topography requires new skills such as geographic interpretation, such as those derived from sonar and multi-beam sea floor mapping. Geo-referencing charts, and combining them with habitat mapping on a web based platform is a new area to be explored.

**What is your favourite place and / or favourite thing about the Maldives?**

I like inhabited islands that take pride in their history and monuments and do their best to maintain traditional learning. □

---

*Thomas Pickard is a writer and photographer who called the Maldives home for two years and is an avid lover of maps and atlases.*





# Services

## Excursions:

A day trip or a half-day excursion can take you to an uninhabited island, where you can snorkel, have a picnic and enjoy the Maldives' pristine natural beauty.

## Private Charters:

Chartering a Twin Otter is about freedom and the chance to explore and experience the Maldives in a way most people rarely do; a charter gives you the freedom, the privacy and space to relax as you desire.

## VIP Flights:

For luxury seaplane travel look no further than our custom designed VIP Twin Otter aircraft featuring a 10-seat configuration with a variety of amenities and cabin services. The VIP Twin Otters feature fifty percent more legroom and seat width, courtesy of the 10-seat configuration instead of the normal 18, comfortable leather seats, large foldout tables and noise cancelling JVC headsets, which can also be connected to your iPod. Cabin services on the VIP flight include refreshing towels, bottled water and soft drinks. Watch the incredible atoll formations slip by below or use the large cushions and the spacious seating to stretch out and catch up on some rest.

## Passenger Evacuation:

We always wish our guests the safest, most enjoyable holiday ever! However, should there be doubts as to whether you can get expert medical and emergency help in time in case of emergency, do reassure yourself that TMA does provide excellent passenger evacuation service, should it be needed.

## Resort Transfers:

From the airport direct to your resort, on a flight that you will treasure as one of the best parts of your holiday in the Maldives. With us you will be whisked away to your chosen destination as soon as you arrive in the Maldives. We take you from the airport right to the doorstep of your resort. Flight times vary between 10 minutes and 50 minutes depending on the distance.

## Photo Flights:

From the air it is magical and breathtakingly beautiful. Wherever you look you will find a perfect frame for a shot that you can be proud of. Photo flights can be customized to suit your specific wishes.







## TMA Fact File

46	No. of aircraft	950,000+	Passengers per year
120,000+	Flights per year	1,000+	Employees



# maldivian Cowries

## an ancient trail of wealth

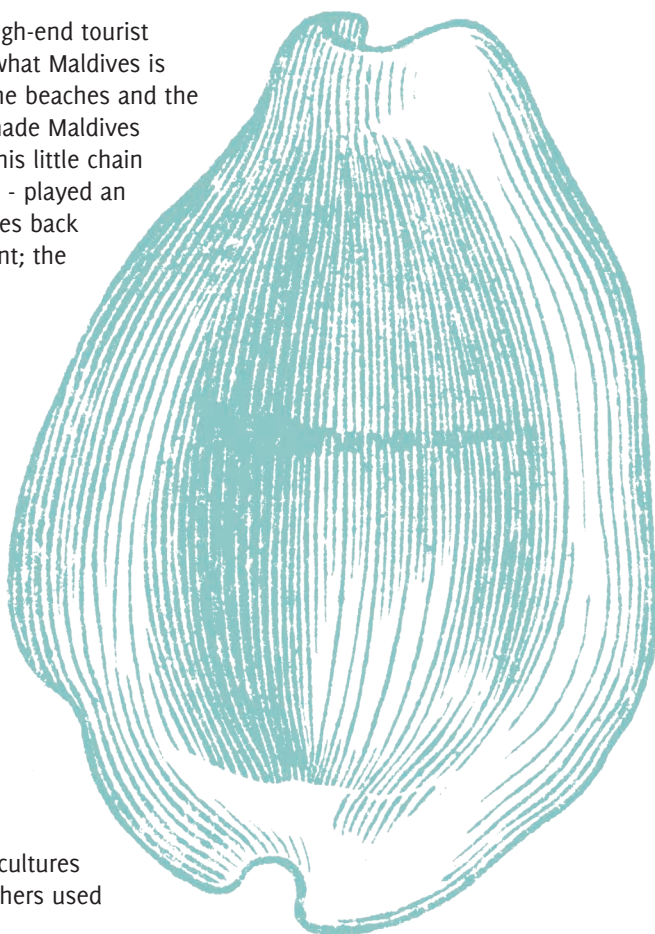
BY: FATHMATH IJAZA

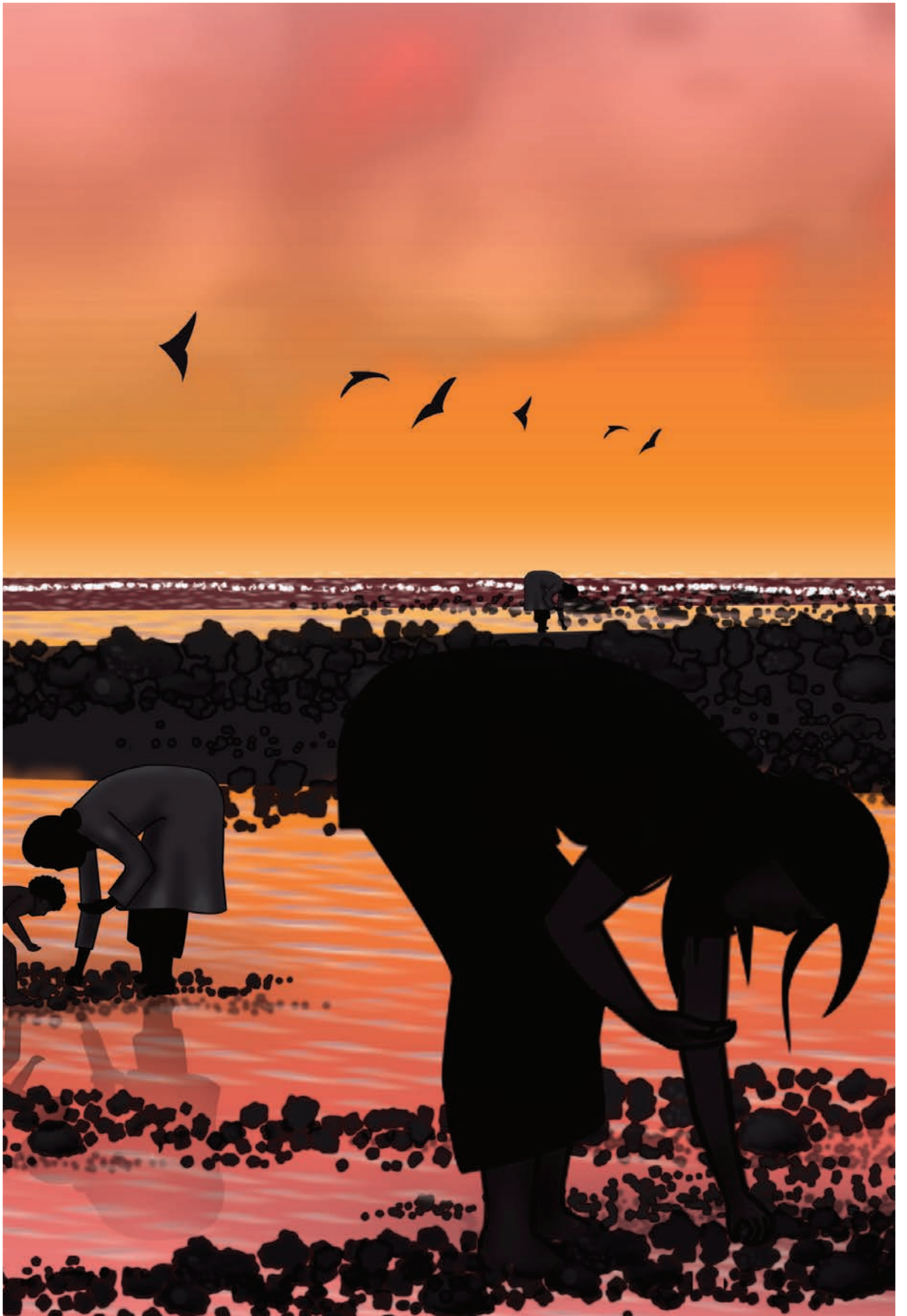
Even as recently as the latter half of the twentieth century it was not uncommon to see women combing the reef, their dresses gathered up, bent down from the waist, collecting shells in the ankle-deep lagoons during low tides. Then it was a recreational activity, and some may even say that it was more of a habitual thing for women to do, that has been passed on from generation to generation over several centuries. It may seem leisurely, but travel back a few centuries and you will find that collecting shells from the reef was a far more serious business.

Long before the Maldives became popular as a high-end tourist destination the country was famous but not for what Maldives is widely recognized for today. It was not the pristine beaches and the teal blue lagoons or the glorious sunshine that made Maldives a destination highly sought after. Centuries ago this little chain of islands - so tiny and barely visible on the map - played an important role in international commerce. Maldives back then was renowned, for something totally different; the money cowry.

The Maldives is made up of almost 1200 islands, several hundred sandbanks and countless reefs. Reefs stretch out for miles around many of the islands. Shells of various kinds are plentiful in the reefs and the money cowry or *Cyprae moneta* was one type of shell that was found in abundance. On top of that the country lies directly in one of the main trade routes between East Africa and the South East. The Maldives was a favourite port of call for Arabs, Europeans, the Chinese and anyone else that travelled the seas across the Indian Ocean. It is no wonder that Maldives gained a name for itself and held the monopoly in the cowry trade for centuries.

Shells have been used in many forms in various cultures across the world. Some used them as jewellery, others used





them as charms and in some places they were worn around the neck as a badge of rank. Most importantly cowries were used as a medium of exchange. It is known that the Chinese used cowries as money as early as three thousand years ago. Shells, especially cowries have many of the characteristics of modern money; it is durable, it is highly divisible and most importantly it was scarce, at least in parts of the world where it was used as money. There are 250 different species of cowries, but the most recognized of them all is *Cyprae Moneta*, also known as money cowry or Maldivian Cowry.

Maldivian Cowries have been unearthed in the most unexpected historical ruins. The petite cowries have been found in large numbers in ancient ruins in China, in the port of Lothal, a port dating back to the Indus Civilization, and at ancient archeological sites even in Europe as far north as the Arctic Circle. One can only speculate as to when and where these shells originated. However even if they were from the Maldives it may not be as surprising as it may seem. Records dating as far back as the 4th century AD mention a visit by emissaries of the Maldivian King who traveled to Rome bearing gifts to the Emperor. Documents written during the time of the Tang Dynasty in the 8th and 9th centuries, records visits by Maldivian emissaries to China in the 7th Century bearing gift for the Emperor.

One of the earliest written records of the Maldivian shell trade was by the Arab trader and historian, Sulaiman. In the 9th Century AD Sulaiman wrote about the importance of shell trade in the Maldives. He noted in his writing that the country was at that time ruled by a queen, who amassed these cowries in numbers, to replenish the royal depot. The importance of shells was so great that Arabs went as far to name the Maldives after them; *Diva-Kauzah* or the Cowrie Islands.

The Maldives had the monopoly in money cowry and this matches with the memoirs of travelers and historians who visited the Maldives during those days. Francois Pyrard de Laval who got shipwrecked in the Maldives and lived here for five years between 1602 and 1607 wrote in his personal memoir about what he observed in Male'





at the time. His writings give a great insight into the trade and how it was conducted.

Many Arab historians' also noted in their journals, the ingenious method used by Maldivians to collect the huge amounts of cowries to fulfill the

“

They call them “boli” cowrie, and export to all parts in infinite quantity in such wise I have seen 30 or 40 whole cargo ships loaded with them without other cargo. All go to Bengal, for there only is a demand for a larger quantity at high prices. They people of Bengal use them for ordinary money, although they have gold and silver and plenty of other metal and what is more strange, kings and great lords have houses built expressly to store these shells, and treat them as part of their treasure. All the merchants from other places in India take a large quantity to carry to Bengal where they are always in demand; for they are produced nowhere but at the Maldives on which account they serve as petty cash as I have said.

When I came to Male' for the first time there was a vessel at the anchor from Cochin, a town of the Portuguese of 400 ton burthen; the captain and merchants were mestifs, part Portuguese, the others christened Indians all dressed in Portuguese fashion and they had come solely to load with these shells.

”

- Francois Pyrard de Laval

global demand and maintain the monopoly over the shell trade back then.

They described how coconut fronds were dipped in the sea and kept for a few days, so that mollusks would attach themselves to these leaves in their hundred. These fronds are then dragged on to the shore and the shells were picked and buried to kill the mollusks in them. They were then dried in the sun and packed for sale.

It was during those days that Arab seafarers crossed the seas, their ships laden with goods,

arrived at the shores of Maldives to unload these goods and load with heaps of shiny cowries in exchange. Pyrard goes on to describe in detail how the cowry trade was conducted;

“ for all these “boli” are put in parcels of 12,000 in little baskets of coconut leaves of open work lined inside with cloth of same coconut palm to prevent the shells from falling out. These parcels or baskets of 12,000 are negotiated there as bags of silver are here, which between merchants are taken as counted but not by others, for they are not so clever at counting that in less than no time they will take tally of a whole parcel. Also in Cambay and elsewhere in India they set the prettiest of these shells in article of furniture as if they were marbles of precious stones ”

*“The Voyage of Francois Pyrard of Laval to the East Indies, the Maldives, the Moluccas and Brazil” 1611*

As the tides of time changed so did the ways of the people. The importance of cowries waned over time. However until the middle of the last century the Maldives was the main exporter of cowry to the world. Today people would only remember the humble shell as a pretty little toy they played with and probably used as pieces in various traditional board games. You may see some as you walk along the beach. Give it a thought. They have a long history behind them.

The cowry shell still remains an integral part of Maldivian history and culture. It cannot be denied that these tiny shells have shaped our nation in its days of glory. Even today it is an important symbol of the country’s economy and commerce. The cowry shell is the logo of the Maldives Monetary Authority and it is prominently displayed in the Maldivian currency. □





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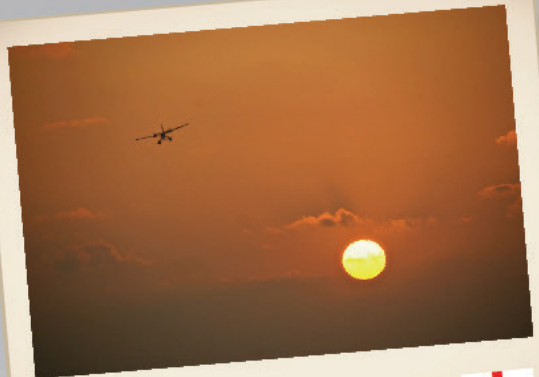
# INFLIGHT

MAGAZINE



## Your pics with TMA

A selection of pictures sent in by our readers



**Stephen Coombes**  
England



**Anika Poen**  
Netherlands



**Ghalia Abbas**  
UAE



Please send in your pictures to [inflight@thinkmaldives.com](mailto:inflight@thinkmaldives.com) with your name and address, date and the route on which the picture was shot. A few lines on what you want to say about the shot is also welcome.



**INFLIGHT**

TMA INFLIGHT MAGAZINE



# *manta* **Snorkel**

BY: SARAH HARVEY

For many people visiting the Maldives, swimming with manta rays is one of their biggest dreams. You never forget your first encounter with the majestic creatures. Their elegance, agility and other-worldly appearance combine to make for a magical spectacle that remains with you for a lifetime. There's never any guarantee that you'll see any on a manta-spotting trip, but when you do, it's well worth the wait.

The first time I swam with manta rays in the wild was at Anantara Veli Resort & Spa Maldives.

“Manta! Manta!” The cry we had all been waiting for rang out from our guide. Our assorted group of snorkellers and divers of all ages had been dropped off at a shallow sandy plateau where there had been some recent sightings of manta rays and we had all been splashing around in the warm water for less than half an hour before we got the signal. A surge of adrenaline rushed through me at the news. We were about to swim with manta rays in the wild!

Being one of the snorkelling rabble, I dipped my head under the water to see where the guide was pointing. The snorkel almost fell out of my mouth as it gaped wide in amazement at the sight of a large manta ray just a few metres beneath my feet! Mesmerised by the sight, I remained on the spot and lifted up my fins to watch it pass beneath me, unable to take my eyes off it as it glided away, its shape gradually fading into a blue shadow before it melted into the hazy depths.

My skin had been stinging slightly from all the plankton which had attracted the mantas to come to that spot to feed but the sight of my first manta ray made me completely forget the mild prickling discomfort. The initial surge of excitement from seeing my first manta hadn't begun to ebb when I saw our guide pointing again and turned to see two more manta rays gliding along side by side, funnelling plankton into their strange alien-like mouths. Then a third manta slid along the sandy plateau as the largest manta ray swept into vision.

As they slowly glided past I took in their strange triangular 'wings', white underbellies and gaping mouths. Their gracefulness and elegance was spellbinding. I immediately understood why manta rays are on so many snorkellers' and divers' must-see lists. I duck-dived down and attempted to follow them from a respectable distance but they effortlessly outswam me, leaving me watching



them disappear ahead of me before suddenly returning again from one side. They didn't appear to mind all the attention from the small group of curious snorkellers and divers, but we all made sure not to try to touch them because our guide had informed us that manta rays have a protective mucus membrane that surrounds their body so if you touch them you can remove that coating and leave them susceptible to infections or lesions.

Manta rays can be spotted in various locations throughout the year in the Maldives. The location depends on their migratory pattern. There are thought to be around 10,000 manta rays in the Maldives; this is due to a combination of

factors including the abundance of food, lack of natural predators and the lack of big-scale and commercial fishing in the Maldives.

Staff from most dive centres based at resorts and on inhabited islands in the Maldives sometimes know roughly when and where manta rays can possibly be spotted and can organise snorkelling or diving excursions for groups and individuals. But of course, you have to bear in mind that they're wild creatures so there can never be any cast-iron guarantee of seeing any even if you book a 'Manta Trip'. However, some resorts such as Four Seasons Resorts Maldives have a special 'Manta On-Call Service' where you can sign up to be

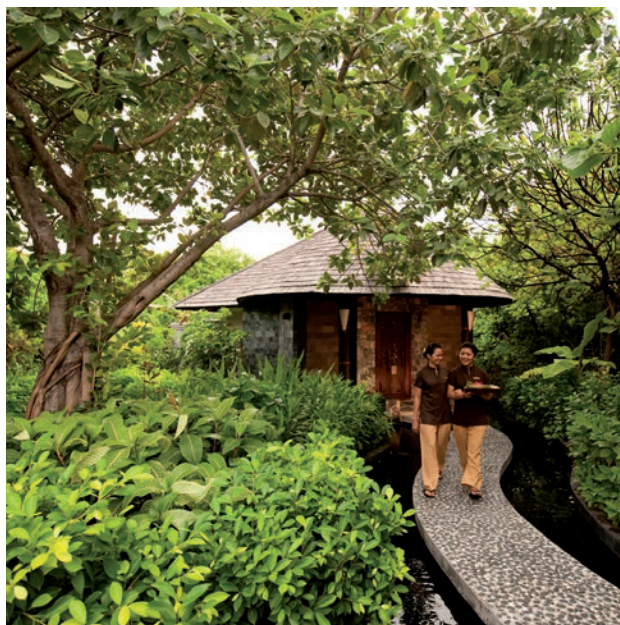


alerted as soon as the dive centre staff spot any mantas while you're busy enjoying the resort.

There are countless 'cleaning stations' and favoured feeding grounds for mantas across the Maldives. One of the most famous is Hanifaru Bay in Baa Atoll, a Marine Protected Area and also the home of the Maldivian Manta Ray Project which researches and monitors the manta population. Visitors can purchase special tickets to visit Hanifaru Bay via their resort or safari boat. Visitor numbers are monitored and there are special regulations in place there in order to protect the Maldives' precious manta population. □







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MALDIVES

# *thousand island* **adventures**

## Pilot Andrew Farr

**Barefoot pilot Andrew Farr has been flying seaplanes for Trans Maldivian Airways for eight years. Flying around the tropical islands of the Maldives is about as different as it gets from his native Canada where Andrew traded floats for skis in order to negotiate frozen lakes, sometimes even encountering wild bears. Here Andrew chats about life as a pilot in the Maldives and at home...**

“My home town really is paradise... for six months of the year. The other six months are a little too cold for my tastes. It can get down to -20 in the winter. That’s not bad, really, for Canada.

“Before coming to the Maldives, I spent nearly a decade flying in the remote far north of the Canada where temperatures of -40 or colder are not uncommon in the winter. That was the main reason I came to the Maldives; I’m not a big fan of freezing weather.

“I get to go back to Canada a few months a year and generally save it for the summer months. I consider myself very lucky to be able to experience the summer paradise of the Thousand Islands and also get to experience this paradise we have in the Maldives. I have the best of both worlds!

“I’ve always wanted to be a pilot. My father was a pilot so I guess it’s in the blood. I first took the controls of a plane on my seventh birthday! We were staying at a cottage on a lake in gorgeous Haliburton, Ontario. I remember getting seven dollars for my birthday, a small fortune at the time. There was a hardware store in the village and for two dollars I bought a small plastic float plane toy. Across the lake there was an actual real floatplane and I begged and pleaded with my parents to go see it. My father told me we

could go for a flight but it would cost five dollars and after some great thought, I volunteered my remaining five dollars and off we went.

“I’m quite sure it cost more than five dollars but my father didn’t let on. I can still remember the flight. I sat in the front seat with the pilot while my father and sister sat in the back. The pilot actually let me take control of the plane. He gave me my first lesson and I was hooked! I remember my father telling me to stand still while he took a picture but I was far too eager to get going as you can see in the picture!





“When I finished high school, I was told prospects in aviation were few so I somewhat reluctantly went to university. Six years, a diploma and degree later I entered the labour pool. I studied Business and at the time, university graduates in Canada were lucky if they could find a job in a coffee shop! So six years later and after many unsuccessful attempts to find a somewhat stable job in my field (or even at a coffee shop) I decided to follow my lifelong dream to fly.

“After flight school, a few hundred resumes and countless thousands of miles in my car looking for my first flying job, I got a float rating and landed my first job flying a Cessna 185 on floats. Like most that dream of flying, I envisioned myself flying ‘the big metal’ but I fell in love with float flying. After nearly a decade working for small operators in Canada’s remote north, flying just about every type of aircraft with floats attached, I finally landed my dream job here at Trans

Maldivian Airways... and I haven’t looked back.

“At least once a day one of the passengers will tell me that I have the best job in the world, and I would have to agree. I’m so glad I never was able to get a job in that coffee shop! As one of the longest-serving expat pilots here, I’ve seen many changes over the years. We are now the largest seaplane operator in the world and we keep growing. I only hope I can be a part of TMA for many years to come.

“Looking back to the early days of my career, I really did enjoy my time working in Northern Canada. It was quite a contrast to working in the Maldives! I actually lived and worked on Native reservations for many years. These areas are not accessible by road so flying is the only way they can get to or from their homes and as well it’s the supply lifeline to the communities.



“The flying was amazing. The north of Canada is dotted with hundreds of thousands of lakes so in the summer, floatplanes are the most convenient way to access these remote areas. In the winters we would trade the floats for skis and land on the surface of the frozen lakes. The ice can be up to four feet thick and can support extraordinary weight. If you’ve seen the show Ice Road Truckers you’d know the ice is so thick that huge trucks can drive on their surface. Many of the communities have winter roads that are cut through the forests and then across the lakes and thus can only be used for a few months in the winter. The going is very slow and the roads are winding and treacherous to say the least.

“While we often have to delay take-offs here in the Maldives because of curious dolphins or turtles, the north of Canada has its curious creatures as well... but these ones have the potential to make a meal of you! Wolf packs and bears are not uncommon sights. They generally keep to themselves though. However, once, while I was trying to start a plane on the frozen surface of a very remote lake, 200 miles from the closest fellow human being, I was approached by a pack of about 20 wolves. They got to within about 100 feet but when the engine finally got going they ran for the cover of the forest. Well, all except a very large black one. He actually started to chase the plane. Thank goodness he didn’t have wings!

“Another time, I came face to face with a 300 pound bear. I was hired by an exploration company to do a survey of the remote and uninhabited Hudson’s Bay Area of northern Manitoba. We would land on lakes and try to find a place to secure the plane. There are no dock hands up there, or even docks for that matter. There were four ‘techies’ that would then take electronic equipment into the forest and do their techie thing while I was free to fish off the plane or explore.

“This was in the height of summer and blueberries were so abundant in places the ground looked blue. We were spending the nights at a remote but quite luxurious lodge during our month-long survey. I decided to bring a bucket of berries back to the cook so that he could make us blueberry





Photos by Andrew Farr

muffins and pies and pancakes.

“I was beside a fallen tree scooping berries off the bush by the handful when I noticed berries falling to the ground and rolling under the fallen tree trunk. Not wanting to waste any berries I reached down to grab the berries on the ground but a somewhat larger and noticeable more hairy hand than mine extended down from the other side of the log and beat me to it. The hair stood up on the back of my neck and on my arms and legs and even on my eyelashes I’m quite sure!

“Standing up slowly and peering over the log, I came face to face with my competition for the berries. Thankfully, he was as memorized by the berries as I was and he didn’t seem to notice me. I know now what the term ‘frozen with fear’ means. I couldn’t move a muscle. Thankfully after what seemed like an hour but was more probably about two minutes, the massive bear left for bluer pastures.

“It all seems so far away from the Maldives. I’m now in my eighth happy year of employment with Trans Maldivian Airways. As I said, it was a long road to get here. I applied for many years until they felt I had the experience they were looking for.

“I really can’t imagine doing anything else. The best part of the job is that our clients are genuinely happy to see us; it’s great to see the smiles on their faces as we fly over the amazingly beautiful water and islands of this paradise. I never get tired of the view from my ‘office’.” □



Photos by Andrew Farr





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*Maldives*

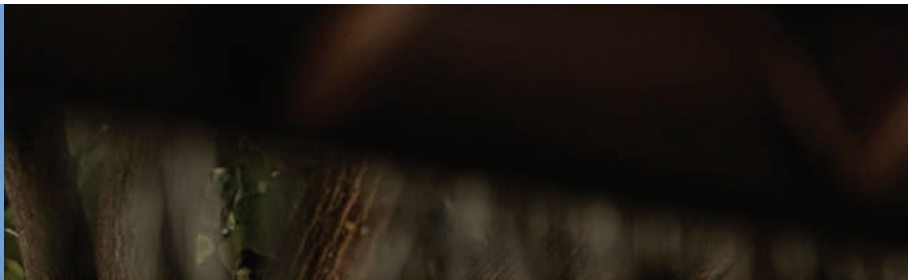
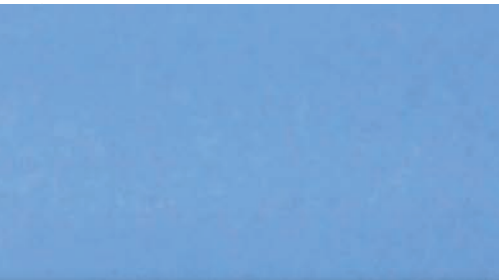
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*\*Guests booking a minimum of three nights at Kuda Huraa and three nights at Landaa Giraavaru will receive complimentary seaplane transfers for two between the two resorts. Quote 'Paradise Twice' when booking.*



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Tuniu (Nasdaq:TOUR) is a leading online leisure travel company in China that offers a large selection of packaged tours, including organized and self-guided tours, as well as travel-related services for leisure travelers through its website tuniu.com and mobile platform. Tuniu's recognized brand in leisure travel and growing customer base enable it to source a broad range of products from high-quality travel suppliers at competitive prices.

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2013年，去马尔代夫旅游的中国游客中，有10.9%购买的是途牛的产品。  
In 2013, customers who joined Tuniu's packaged tours in Maldives accounted for 10.9% of total Chinese travelers visiting Maldives during the period.

2014年1月，途牛旅游网在马尔代夫首家开设接机柜台，为途牛的旅客提供更加贴心的服务。

In January 2014, Tuniu was the first to set up a service counter in Maldives to better serve our customers there.

2014年8月，马尔代夫总统亚明前往途牛旅游网总部进行参观交流。  
Mr. Yameen, president of Maldives visited Tuniu headquarters in August 2014.

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# The Seaplane



The DHC-6 Twin Otter is a Canadian 19-passenger STOL (Short Takeoff and Landing) utility aircraft developed by de Havilland Canada and currently produced by Viking Air.

De Havilland has a history of more than 80 years; the first de Havilland Canada flew in 1925, piloted by none other than Geoffrey de Havilland. The aircraft was called the 'Moth' and was quickly followed by many variations – all of them highly successful.

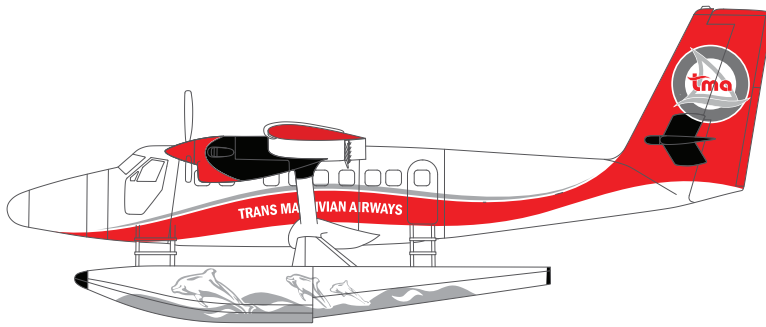
Development of the Twin Otter began in 1964, with the first flight on May 20, 1965 as a twin-engined replacement for the single-engined Otter had been planned by de Havilland Canada. Twin engines not only provided improved safety but also allowed for an increase in payload while retaining the renowned short takeoff and landing (STOL) qualities. Design features included double slotted trailing edge flaps

and ailerons that work in unison with the flaps to boost STOL performance. The availability of the 550 shp (410 kW) Pratt and Whitney Canada PT6A-20 propeller turbine engine in the early 1960s made the concept of a twin more feasible.

The Twin Otter proved to be an immediate success, and became immensely popular for short-haul commuter transportation. The Twin Otter is one of the most versatile aircraft ever produced and could come with floats, skis or tricycle landing gear depending on the needs of its users.

It is our belief that our success and the consolidation of our reputation as a safe and reliable seaplane operator in a country such as the Maldives is primarily due to the fact that the Twin Otter is the most ideal small aircraft to the aviation environment in which we operate.

# Fleet



Number of  
Seaplanes



Passenger  
Capacity

VIP Configuration Aircraft

2

10

DHC-6 Twin Otter 400 Series

3

15

DHC-6 Twin Otter 100/200/300 Series

41

15

46

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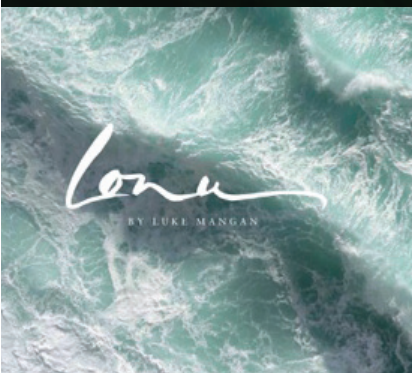
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# Recently at TMA



## TMA Celebrates 25 Years

January 2015

TMA celebrated “25 Years of Excellence” at a special event held in Hulhule Island Hotel on January 8th. The ceremony marked the awarding of “World’s Leading Seaplane Operator” and “Indian Ocean’s Leading Seaplane Operator” to TMA at the 2014 World Travel Awards. TMA had consequently also received ISO-9001 Certification for Quality Management System, ISO-14001 Certification for Environmental Management System and ISO-18001 Certification for Occupational Health and Safety – thus making TMA the first airline in Maldives to receive the above three ISO Certification as an integrated management system. In addition, TMA also received the PAS 99 Certification from the certification body British Standards Institution (BSI).

# Pilot Scholarship Awarding

August 2014



TMA awarded the five recipients of our Zuvana Pilot Scholarship Program back in August last year. The scholarship program offers a great opportunity for five Maldivians to train as pilots in Canada. Selections were made from over 200 applicants. The scholarship program was initiated under TMA's Youth Development program entitled Zuvana, which translates to youth. Scholarships were awarded to the successful candidates by the President of Maldives H.E. President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom at a special ceremony held in the capital Malé on August 5th 2014. Several senior government figures and over 100 dignitaries were in attendance at the event, which was broadcast live. Inflight wishes them all the best for their training and look forward to seeing them pilot future flights.

## New TMA Slogan Introduced

August 2014

TMA Director and Blackstone's Senior Managing Director Mr. Amit Dixit unveiled TMA's new slogan – "Sun, Sand, Sea & Seaplane" during the ceremony held to award the "Zuvana" Pilot Scholarships. Mr. Amit noted that the slogan highlighted the importance the seaplane held for the Maldivian tourism industry. With many of you heading out to your resorts, we are sure your Maldivian holiday will be incomplete without the four S – Sun, Sand, Sea & Seaplane.



**TRANS MALDIVIAN AIRWAYS**

*Sun, Sand, Sea & Seaplane*

## TMA Brand Identity Guideline unveiled

September 2014

TMA has launched the First Edition of its Brand Identity Guideline as foundation towards standardising the company's brand image internally and externally. A copy of the First Edition was presented to TMA's CEO Mr. A.U.M. Fawzy by TMA's Business Development Manager Mr. Ahmed Fazeel during the unveiling.



# ПУТЕШЕСТВИЯ КАК СТИЛЬ ЖИЗНИ



  
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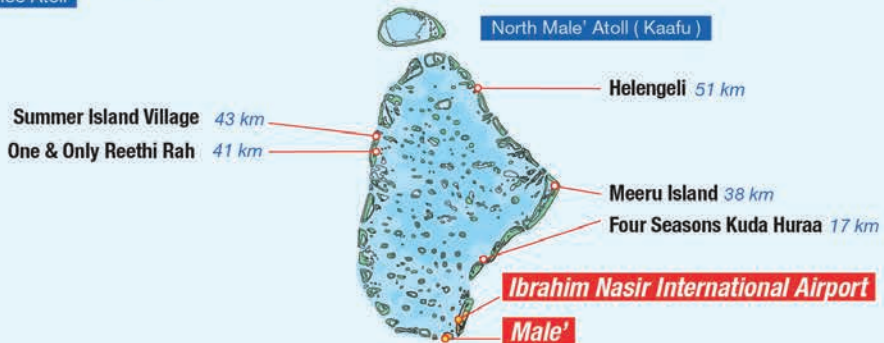
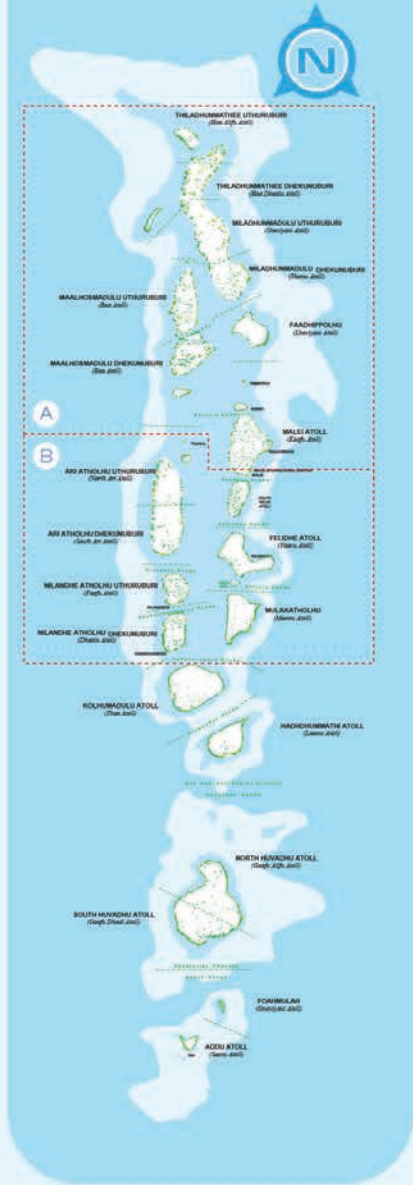
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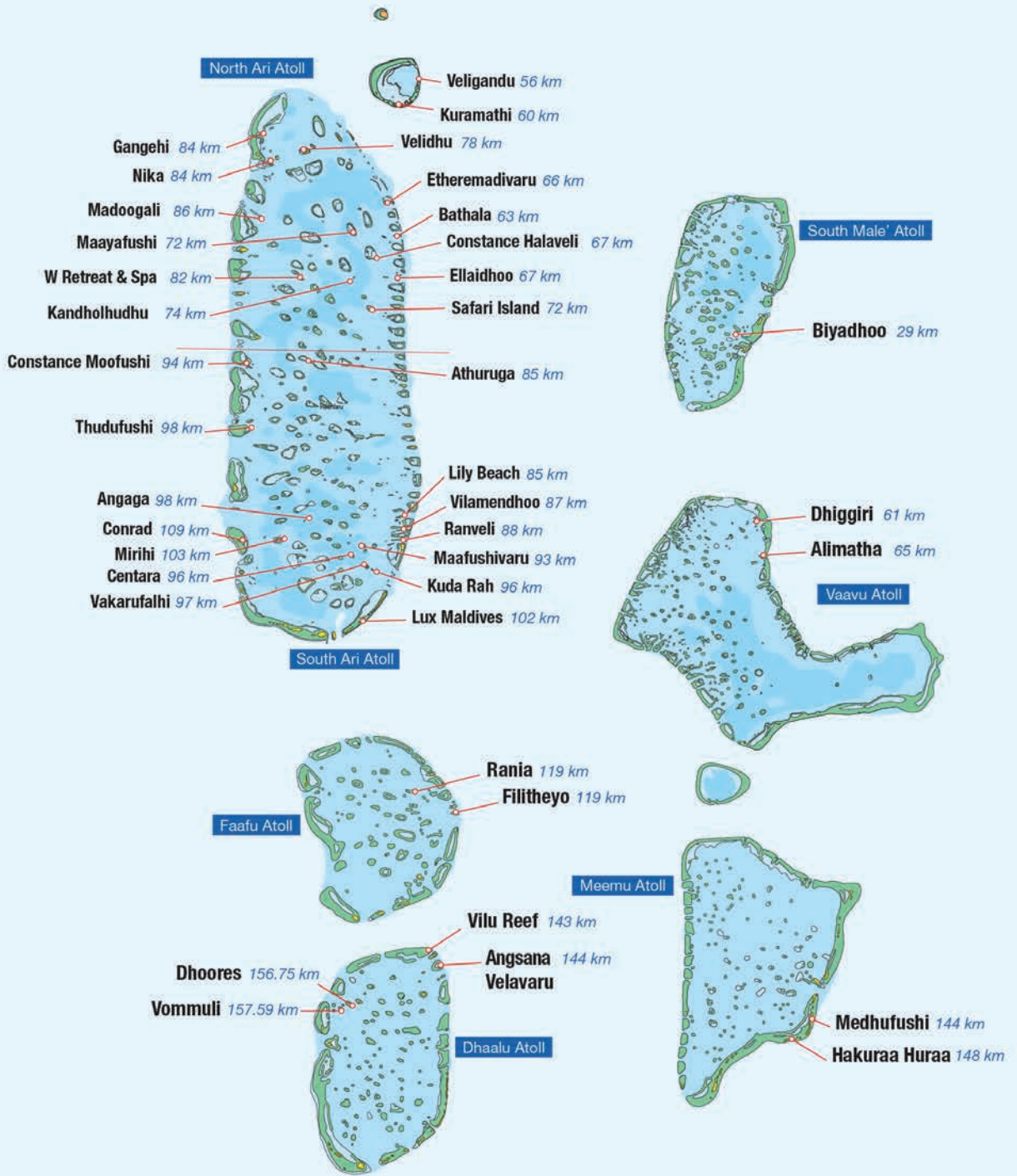


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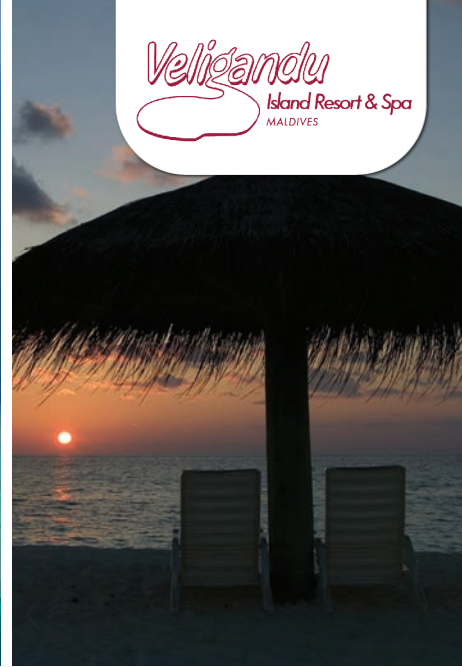
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