

# Island Skies



TRANS MALDIVIAN AIRWAYS MAGAZINE

Issue 02 | 2019



**Leave Nothing But Footprints!  
Yours Truly, Maldives**

Arts & Crafts in the Islands

Nakaiy

Reef Friendships

Sneak Peek with Hussain Jiffry



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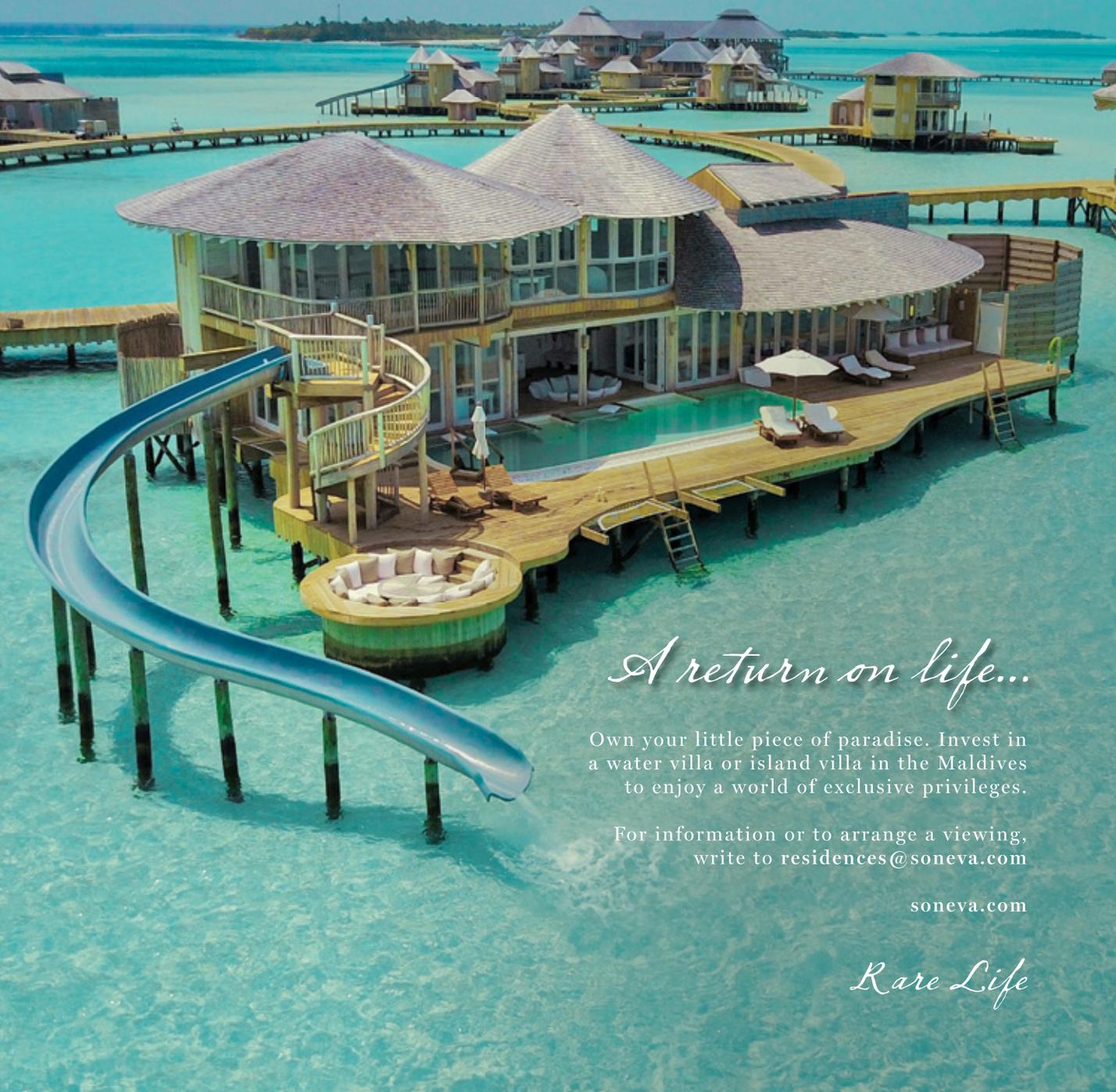


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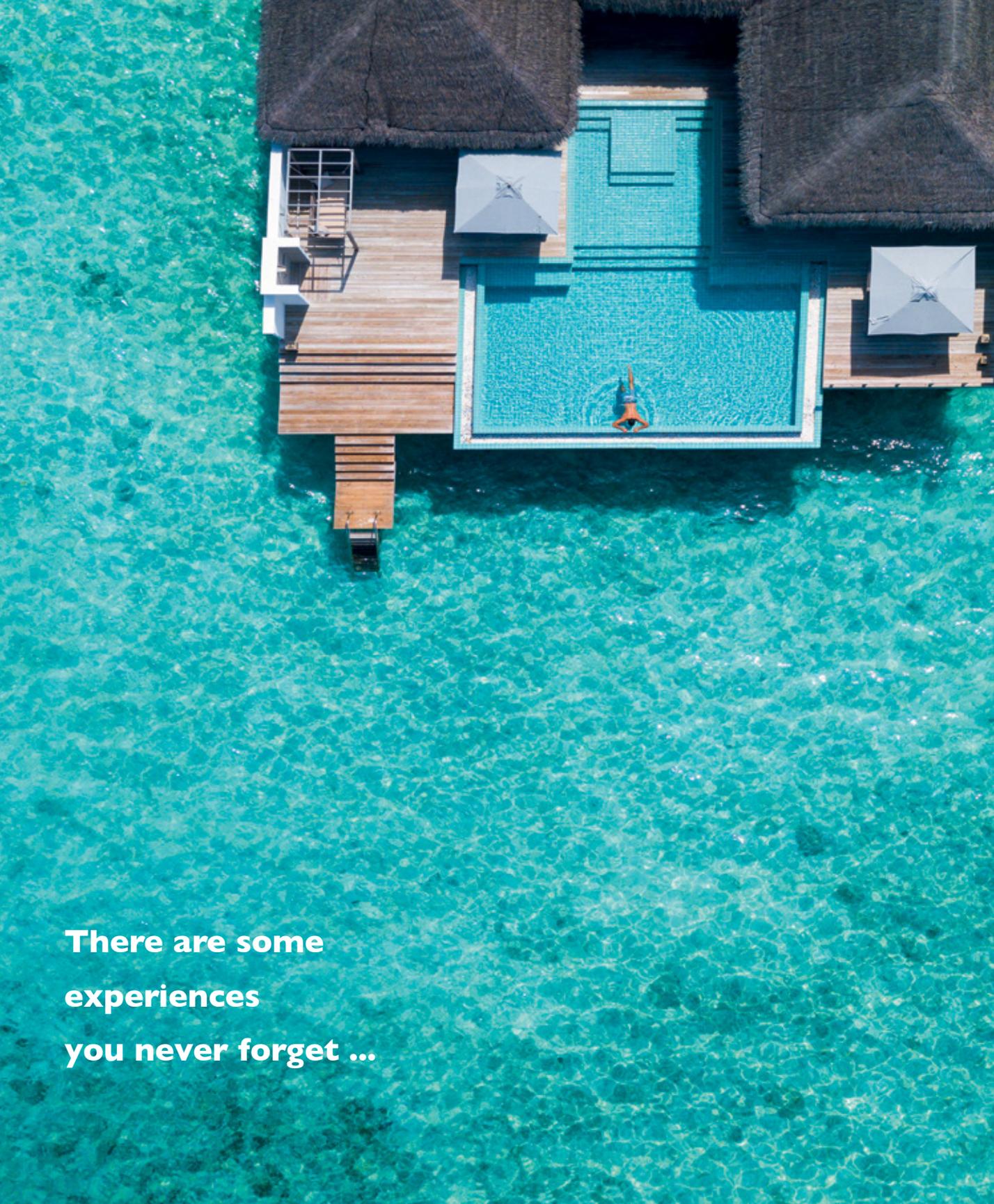




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# Editor's Note



Every travel story is a unique and memorable experience. But ours is going to be truly exceptional as you can already see from the turquoise isles crowned with white sandy beaches that can be viewed from your seats while gliding over these stunning islands.

The Maldives is as much about its breathtaking views as it is about its people, culture, traditions and the unique experiences offered to all our visitors. In this issue of Island Skies, we explore some of the Maldives experiences written and presented by prominent writers who have first hand lived them. The ancient traditional arts and craft practices of Maldives is acquainted in great detail by Donna and the indigenous calendar system called Nakaiy, a calendar used by the Maldivians based on observations of the relationship between stars and weather is explicated by Eleonora.

As the greatest direct threat to this heavenly islands being Climate change and its hazardous effects, we urge you to consider and conclude your lovely journey in these islands as Barbara puts it by 'Leaving nothing but footprints' in the sand, a temporary tan and lasting memories.

May the scenic route you took with us nourish your mind and soul and prepare you to pursue new adventures with a revitalized spirit.

Adheel Ismail  
Editor



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# Komandoo

MALDIVES



INSPIRED TRANQUILLITY.

# Contributors



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Verena Wiesbauer is a marine biologist and environmental consultant who founded an educational brand "Oceanoholic" and started Mermaiding in Maldives. She is currently consulting the solar energy company "Swimsol Maldives"



**Sarah Harvey**  
Sarah Harvey is a professional journalist who splits her time between the Maldives and the French Riviera. She is the founder of Manta Media and has a speciality in luxury travel and tourism.

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# Welcome On Board



Welcome to the paradise!

We take great privilege in welcoming you to Maldives and on-board Trans Maldivian Airways.

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This year has been an exciting year for Maldives with a great surge in tourist arrivals to this island nation. To support this growth, we have also embarked on a massive expansion drive, with plans to add five additional seaplanes to our existing fleet of 52 aircraft. The first of these seaplanes arrived in the Maldives in September 2019 and the remaining four are scheduled to arrive in the next few months. Since its inception, TMA has played a pivotal role in developing the tourism infrastructure in the Maldives and we will strive to continue doing the same in the future as well.

TMA now serves more than 80 resorts in the Maldives and the latest additions to our destination list are Emerald Maldives Resort & Spa in Raa atoll, Baglioni Resort Maldives in Dhaalu atoll, InterContinental Maldives Maamunagau in Raa atoll, Joali Maldives in Raa Atoll, JW Marriott Resort & Spa in Shaviyani atoll and Cinnamon Velifushi in Vaavu atoll. We look forward to adding new routes and destinations during the year 2020 as well.

With passenger safety as one of our utmost priorities combined with our excellent customer service track record, we endeavor to maintain our title as the World's Leading Seaplane Operator and Indian Ocean's Leading Seaplane Operator for the fourth consecutive year.

We always believe first impressions leave a lasting memory on every visitor who comes here and it could be the only impression that might determine whether they would want to visit this beautiful country again. With this in mind all our teams work tirelessly both individually and collectively to improve the service standards and ensure you have the best and the most unique experience of a lifetime. Once again, thank you for choosing Trans Maldivian Airways and making us a part of your island holiday. We wish you a pleasant holiday and hope you will takeback memories of a lifetime. It's an absolute pleasure to have you on board. Have a safe flight.

A.U.M. Fawzy  
CEO



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**Maldives**  
**Beyond sun, sand & 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 400,000, the country still remains one of the smallest independent nations in the world.

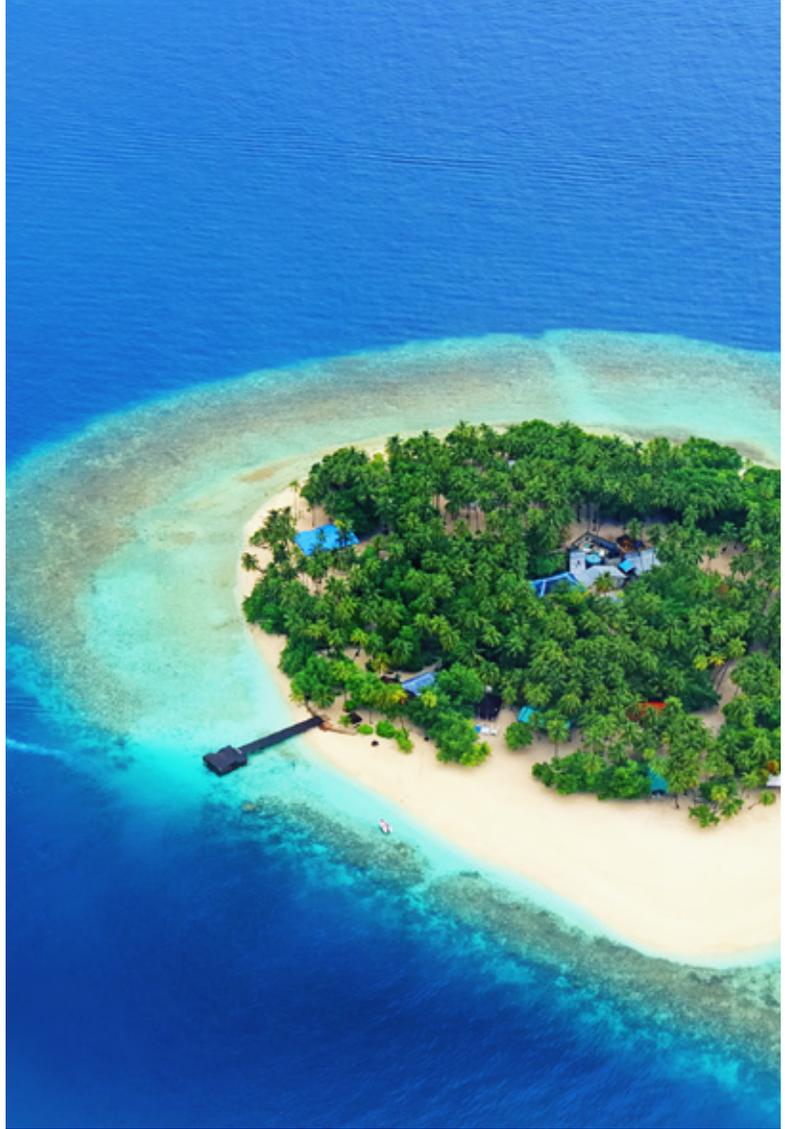
### Religion

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 cultures 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', with 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.

*The Maldives has been a melting pot of different cultures as people from different parts of the world came here and settled down.*

### Education

Maldives boasts one of the highest literacy rates in the world with 98% 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 Indira 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 0800 to 1400 hours and the private sector from 0900 to 1700 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 Dhiraagu and Ooredoo Maldives. 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 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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Photo by Ramon Kamaldeen



# Arts & Crafts in the Islands

By Donna



*Traditional arts and crafts in the Maldives have evolved over the years and many islands have now forged their own successful cottage industries.*

Most ancient Maldivian wood carvings are a wonder to behold. A Maldivian craftsman armed with a few rudimentary tools can carve smooth and finish master works in utmost dedication.

The Dhoni, a boat which provides transportation to islanders is one of the best examples of Maldivian carpentry. It is carved with intricate designs. Many mosques have intricate wood carvings.

More recent times, however, have seen a concentration on smaller hand-made wood carvings such as vases, jewellery boxes and ornamental dhonis (traditional boats), which can easily be packaged as gifts for tourists.

While these may be smaller in size, these carvings, supplemented by lacquer designs have as much, if not more, artistic value.

Records show that the Chinese were the first to manufacture and trade lacquer, and in doing so, helped establish one of the Maldives' most important art-forms.

Lacquer work, or "laajehun" in local tongue, was brought to the Maldives in the 17th century and its protective properties against atmospheric change is, what made it so popular among Maldivian folk.

Small wooden crafted containers and vases, and also buildings meant to stand the test of time, were decorated with lacquer painted intricate floral designs, in bold colours of red, blue, green and gold.

However, recent times have brought into question the survival of this rich cultural heritage. This skill has always been preserved only in the island of Thulhaadhoo in Baa atoll but fewer artisans are taking up the craft.



Photo by Shagaf

At one time lacquer works were a thriving industry and mostly the preserve of noble families in the country. Nowadays, the modern Maldivian craftsman has adopted ancient arts to create mass souvenirs true to Maldivian tradition, for gift shops throughout the capital of Male' and in the resorts.

Maldivians use wood to make these containers and vases. In recent times some of the wood used is not ideal for being exported to drier and colder countries as some of the lacquered wooden handicrafts cracked once in Europe.

Each one beautifully crafted and layered with a lacquer finish.

The brightly coloured lacquered pots and vases that are made in this region can range in price from a USD10 for a small ornament to a foot high vase costing USD225! They come in all shapes, sizes and colours. Some are painted with a traditional Dhivehi design hand-drawn and known as "Liyelaajehun".

The colours used on the lacquer ware are very basic, usually a



Photo by Gadheemee Collection



Photo by Ramon Kamaldeen

*At one time  
lacquer works were a  
thriving industry and  
mostly the preserve  
of noble families in  
the country*

very bright red, yellow and black and traditionally these were made from the juices from trees and insects in the early days.

In the Maldives, lacquerworks are created according to tradition. Here is the process.

First the materials, wood, lacquer and colours have to be sourced.

The lacquer is softened with a hammer and filled with paint. Hammering it in turn, heats up the varnish and enables the colours and lacquer to be mixed together.

Then this lacquer is rolled out into a sausage shape and cut into small strips, each around five inches. These later form the lacquer pieces which are soaked in water to soften them.

The next step is to shape a block of wood to make the base for the wooden ornament.

This is done on a lathe and then the lacquer is applied and the piece polished off with a palm leaf.

As Calcutta grew as a trade hub connecting east to the Middle East and Africa it became much easier to import these materials from India to the Maldives. From there, Burmese rice, the favourite staple of Maldivians, as well as the first Burmese lacquer ware, was imported into the Maldives.

Now the colours can be bright pink, green, purple and orange.

The lathe machine used to make the ornaments costs around \$450 and is able to make around five ornaments which are then hand finished in lacquer. It can be a consuming process. After manufacture, they are then transported to the tourist shops in Male'.

Some motifs used in the mosque ceilings and tomb stones are also lacquered, but they are different from those used in lacquer work.

Even more so than wood carving, coral carving brings to light the true depth of talent and creativity of the Maldivian craftsman of yesteryear – the intricate designs found on ancient burial stones and mosques stand as proof.

Coral carving is also considered by many in the Maldives as a dying art form, but recent works by emerging young artists, using silicon blocks and other such materials instead of the endangered coral, indicates a revival.

Generally, the tricks of the trade are handed down through generations.



Even more so than wood carving, stone carving brings to light the true depth of talent and creativity of the Maldivian craftsman of yesteryear – the intricate designs found on ancient burial stones and mosques stand as proof.

Stone carving is considered by many in the Maldives as a dying art form, but recent works by emerging young artists, using silicon blocks and other such materials instead of the endangered coral, indicates a revival.

Since there is no clay or ceramic industry native to the Maldives, due to the coral sand, Maldivians have become adept at working with coral and also lime stone as building materials. In fact many of the houses in the rural islands are made of coral.

They have carved upon them intricate designs. Traditionally coral was used as the main canvas to work on.

Coconut thatch too was once widely used in the building of the traditional Maldivian house. Fungi and panels of plaited palm fronds are traditionally used for fences, walls and for roofing – as I noticed on a visit to Meedhoo. In modern times this has been adapted to more ornamental uses such as decorating the exteriors and interiors of building.

All in all, indigenous arts and crafts still have a place in the Maldives, but the Maldivians need to be motivated to save their own heritage from market forces in order to preserve it for future generations. This will help to keep their ancient practices alive with the power of the tourist purse to sustain it – perhaps the backpacking market will help greatly.

*The Lowdown on Thulaadhoo*

*What to see:*

*The island is also famous for fishing and has a small population of 2,773 people with more than fifty per cent of them employed in the fishing industry and 10 per cent practicing lacquerworks. The remaining 20 per cent work in the resorts and tourism industry.*



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# Leave nothing but footprints! Yours truly, Maldives

By Barbara Tori



*Ask anyone and they all will know by now that life in plastic is, well, not that fantastic. There is no turning a blind eye to the fact that the world – including picture-perfect, seemingly unsusceptible paradise on earth that is the Maldives – has a plastic pollution problem that requires action, and fast. Various subjects across the country are riding the wave of going green and you, as a guest to this fragile archipelago and a citizen of the world, can and must take measures to help too.*



*A whopping half of all plastic produced is designed to be discarded within minutes after its use!*

Plastic, the ubiquitous material that not too long ago became a synonym for the modern world, has become one of the planet's worst nightmares. While this non-renewable resources-based man-made wonder does have many valuable uses (just think incubators for premature babies, or airplanes and airbags), it is the disposable, single-use products made from it, those that we could easily eschew, that are the worst offenders. A whopping half of all plastic produced is designed to be discarded within minutes after its use! The convenience and the low price come at a high price: your drink bottle, the lid on your take-away coffee, grocery bag, drinking straw and sandwich wrapper all create waste with severe environmental consequences. UNEP estimates that only 9% of all plastic waste ever produced has been recycled. About 12% has been incinerated, while the remaining 79% has accumulated in landfills, dumps or the natural environment.

From landfills and dumps through rivers, either as litter or broken down into smaller particles, plastic is carried into the oceans, the lifeblood of the planet and humankind. If current trends continue, our oceans

could contain more plastic than fish by 2050! While this appears rather abstract and thus difficult to comprehend, the microplastics manace can explain why there is in fact no ridding of it once it has entered the system. Microplastics (pieces of plastic 5mm or smaller) can take various forms: as microbeads in your face wash and toothpaste, plastic broken down into smaller pieces by weather or sunlight, synthetic fibers from your clothes given off when machine washed, and many, many more. These particles are so small that the water filtration systems (if existent at all) don't pick them up, resulting in many compounds, oftentimes with toxic additives, flowing through rivers towards oceans, wreaking havoc along the entire way, and then some. Due to their small size, microplastics are easily ingested by sea creatures, entering the food chain. Aside from seafood, plastics has been found in bottled water, plastic-wrapped food, even in human feces.

The Maldives, depicted as the ultimate sun, sea and sand holiday destination whose delights and beauty we tend to take for granted, is regrettably not exempt from the plastic catastrophe. Just like every

other place in the world, these stunning islands, the ocean around them and coral reefs below it suffer from plastic pollution. Referring back to microplastics, even if you may not see a lot of plastic waste when you go snorkelling or diving in the Maldives, this does not mean that it is not there.

There may still be a lack of infrastructure that would ensure proper waste management, however things are moving in the right direction as an increasing number of resorts and local islands are banning plastic bags and drinking straws, reducing the amount of plastic bottles used, introducing ocean-friendly toiletries and selling biodegradable sunblocks, and generally using eco-friendly materials whenever possible.

99% of the Maldives is water, vying for your attention this holiday to not just seize the opportunities for enjoyment and exploration it offers, but also to educate yourself about what you can do to help preserve this unique natural environment, and use the knowledge received by your resort's marine biologist or anyone else you talk to about ocean conservations, to become a more responsible consumer at home too.

Rare are places so remote, so pristine and so eye-openingly beautiful as the Maldives where one really can, or should, take a pledge and make it a personal mission to kick some planet-destroying habits to preserve not only this fragile archipelago but every place on all four corners of the globe that people and other living beings call, and want to call for many generations to come—home. Leave nothing but footprints in the Maldives, and tread lightly wherever else in the world you go!



*Leave nothing but  
footprints in the  
Maldives, and tread  
lightly wherever else  
in the world you go!*



### Waste Hierarchy The 3 Rs

#### Reduce

Reducing what is produced and consumed is the essence of waste management, the most effective of the three Rs, and the best way to help the environment. Purchase fewer products and choose those with less wasteful packaging. Don't jump too fast on the 'going green' bandwagon either - buying nothing is better for the planet than buying green.

#### Reuse

Reuse items more than once, donate them, have them fixed or re-purpose them. Reusing keeps new resources from being used, and old resources from entering the waste stream. If you can, buy products that contain recycled materials in the first place.

#### Recycle

The last R in the hierarchy, but unfortunately the one most commonly used. Dispose of the items that are no longer in use at appropriate recycling centers, but don't pat yourself on the shoulder just yet – a very small percentage of the world's plastic is recycled, so using less rather than recycling more is the way to go.



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# Nakaiy

By Eleonara Fiorini



*Time goes by much slower in the Maldives. Since ancient times, Maldivian people have been following an indigenous calendar system called Nakaiy, a calendar based on observations of the relationship between stars and weather, that divides the year in only two distinctive seasons.*

I was once struck, during a walk in Hinnavaru - one of the inhabited islands of Lhaviyani Atoll, by a mesmerising wall art of what looked like a compass. Looking closer, I could tell there was much more information written around those circles, than just the earth coordinates.

A friend living there told me it was a representation of the Nakaiy calendar. It immediately caught my interest and I wanted to know more about it. Not being able to read Dhivehi, the maldivian national language, I started my internet research, only to find out that there isn't much information available out there.

It comes out that this ancient calendar is handed down orally through songs, from generation to generation. Like the ancient songs Raivaru and Bandhi, used in earlier times to remember and build knowledge among Maldivians of the intimate connection with the land and environment, the Nakaiy calendar was narrated in songs for the new generations to understand their history, geography and environment.

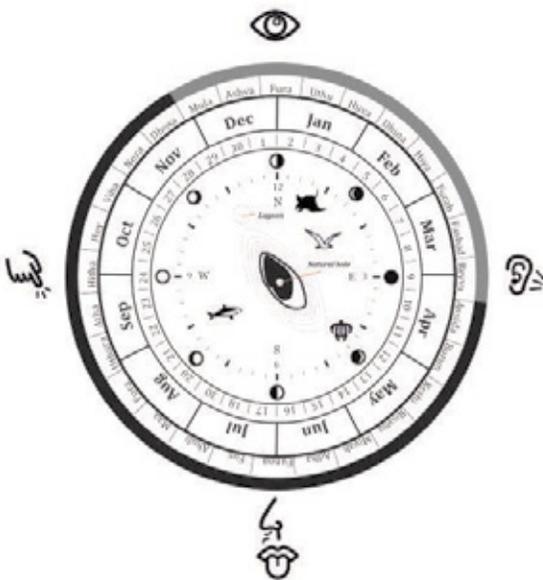
Maldives in fact has a very rich oral tradition, by which important knowledge about survival and daily life is passed on. Fathers would pass this knowledge to their families, but even without leaving written traces, this calendar system is deeply engraved in the tradition of Maldivian people and kept alive in current time.

Being a population living in a country where water is predominant, since the beginning of times Maldivian people realised how connected they are with the natural elements. Their profound knowledge of nature and their innate ability to adapt to it are at the bottom of this fascinating calendar, which is actually a derivative from the Indus Valley Civilisation.

The Nakaiy calendar though is specific to the Maldives and it incorporates Maldivian history, culture and knowledge.

The system divides the year into 27 stars ( nakaiy, in sanskrit ). Each nakaiy lasts around 13-14 days and has its own characteristics and weather

*The Nakaiy calendar though is specific to the Maldives and it incorporates Maldivian history, culture and knowledge.*



pattern, together with specific position of certain group of stars.

The year is also divided into two distinctive seasons: Iruvai and Hulhangu. Iruvai, the North-East monsoon, has 9 Nakaiy and runs from December 10th to April 7th. Iruvai means “wind from East”, referring to the winds which blow mainly from East during this season.

Hulhangu, the South-West monsoon, has 18 Nakaiy and runs from April 8th to December 9th. The word Hulhangu comes from the Sinhala word Hulhangu, meaning “wind”, referring to the strong winds and stormy weather conditions that usually accompany this season. While the Iruvai monsoon comes with less winds and clear skies, Hulhangu is usually paired with occasional rain and strong winds, also known as wet season.

During each Nakaiy, the calendar gives indications not only on the weather conditions but also on the daily activities and habits that locals pursue, such as finding the optimum time for fishing, or for planting crops, or starting a new adventure, or even to declare their love.

All of these information seem to fit perfectly in one of the most ancient Maldivian proverbs which translates to “you have to take precaution, and prepare for safety in daily activities”. What better than the Nakaiy calendar, could prepare you for island life?

For example, it is good luck for you to get wet with rain during Nakaiy Assidha (April 8th-21st), the first nakaiy of Hulhangu season. Very good fishing is predicted on Nakaiy Fas-badhuruva (March 12th-25th), and good harvesting falls during Fura Nakaiy (August 24th-September 6th).

In ancient times, it is said that sailing vessels left Maldives for Cochin in India during Dhinasha Nakaiy (February 1st-13th), because of the north-easterly winds that blows during this Nakaiy. In this current time, where unprecedented scales of urbanization and rapid pace of development have nurtured new lifestyles in the Maldivian culture and people, it is fundamental to keep alive, more than ever, such ancient wisdom and knowledge. The Nakaiy system itself is a constant reminder of how much Maldivians depend and rely on the environment and the nature to survive.

Any damage to the environment is a huge threat to the fragile ecosystem of the Maldives.

We, as people who travel to this beautiful country of Maldives, must remember to treat this nature and environment with respect and caution, minimising our impact on waste management ( I often carry a suitcase of plastic garbage back with me to Italy when I visit the Maldives! ), and cooperating in keeping this ecosystem alive, healthy and protected.



Photo by Ibrahim Rifath





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## Sneak Peek with Hussain Jiffry

Head of Crew Training at TMA

**As the Head of Training at TMA and a central figure in the operations of the largest seaplane fleet in the world, Jiffry's objective is to train and build a proficient team of crew members who can deliver the highest levels of quality, safety and efficiency.**

Island Skies had a chat with Jiffry to get a sneak peek at the massive training operation he leads.

**Island Skies:** Training obviously would begin with having the right people as pilots and crew. What do you look for when hiring?

Jiffry: The hiring process at TMA is very unique and transparent. We not only seek crew who are proficient to fly, but also who can be further developed so that they can advance in their TMA career and life. We look for individuals who can thrive in this type of environment and deliver the highest level of safety and quality in our operations. Our screening and interview process consist of psychometric tests and other evaluations, which are established to evaluate the individuals' level of certain competencies that are required to become a seaplane pilot. We not only look for the aptitude, but most importantly the right attitude that is fit for TMA culture.

**Island Skies:** With such a large operation involving the training and retraining of so many pilots and crew, how is the Training Department structured?

Jiffry: We have two training departments as required by the Maldivian Civil Aviation Authority (MCAA). As Head of Training, I am in charge of both; one is the Approved Training Organization (ATO) and the other is the Crew Training Department (CTR). Under the ATO, we do initial type training, type ratings and licensing for pilots who join us to fly the Twin Otter. The CTR oversees training requirements of existing pilots, cabin crew, flight dispatchers and other operational staff, which includes the range of renewal trainings they have to undergo every year. ATO and CTR are two departments which function under the same roof.

**Island Skies:** Do all pilots undergo flight training no matter how experienced they are?

Jiffry: All pilots, regardless of their previous level of experience will undergo some form of training before they can operate the aircraft as a crew member in TMA. This is not only a regulatory requirement but also TMA's specific requirement to ensure that the highest level of proficiency and standards are maintained by our crew. Our operations involve a multi-crew environment, hence additional training such as Crew Resource Management (CRM) and other non-technical trainings are provided.



**Island Skies:** What is the process that takes a pilot from the initial training to becoming a captain?

Jiffry: A pilot who joins us fresh from initial pilot training would take about two to three months to be released as a Co-pilot. Once they have gained the required flying experience in the Company and pass our Captain Upgrade evaluation, they will be trained to be a Captain. It will take about three years for a Co-pilot to become a Captain.

*"A pilot who joins us fresh from initial pilot training would take about two to three months to be released as a Co-pilot"*

**Island Skies: What is different about flying the Twin Otter and flying with TMA in the Maldives?**

Jiffy: Flying the Twin Otter equipped with floats in this beautiful country, is the most rewarding job that any pilot will encounter. The unforgettable scenery, the exciting nature of operation and the culture of TMA is an experience that crew members will always cherish for the rest of their lives. The aircraft is flown manually under Visual Flight Rules (VFR) and all flights are conducted during daylight hours only. Our aircrafts are equipped with the latest GPS and advanced flight instruments, which enhance the safety and efficiency of our operations.

**Island Skies: I guess then there is some familiarisation and getting used to the unique environment of the country?**

Jiffy: Yes. It does due to several factors involved. Mainly they are; the practical skills required to operate this aircraft, understanding the challenging conditions and our unique operation. This experience is required to make the best judgments and decisions, in order to provide the safest, most efficient and comfortable service to our valuable customers. A pilot may experience changes in wind, water and weather conditions on the same day at the same location. Hence it does take a longer time for familiarization and training, in comparison to other types of operations.

*"To become a Chief Flight Instructor a Captain has to work his/her way up, starting as a Line Training Captain"*

**Island Skies: From a passenger's point of view, one may wonder how pilots get to familiarise with all the water aerodromes dotted across the length of the country.**

Jiffy: Once a new pilot has acquired the type rating, he or she will undergo a series of further trainings, mainly in the form of Line Flying Under Supervision (LIFUS), with an experienced and approved Line Training Captain (LTC). This LIFUS portion of the training consists of at least 100 hours of commercial flying. During this time, the pilot will experience take-offs and landings at different destinations (resorts). They will also further understand the concept of float flying; route knowledge, wind, water and weather conditions at different locations, in order to enhance their skills and decision-making capabilities. They may not cover all our destinations, but our established standard operating procedures (SOPs) and the training provided during this period, will ensure that the pilot has a thorough understanding and the required skill set to be released as a competent crew member. In addition to this we have a wealth of highly knowledgeable, experienced and dedicated Captains working with us for decades.

In TMA training, coaching and development is highly encouraged. Hence these experiences are also passed on during normal flights, so that the inexperienced pilots are well-versed on the nature of our operation.

**Island Skies: What are the qualifications and experience of the trainers, and how do you find enough instructors to conduct all this training?**

Jiffy: There are different levels of Instructors. Most of our Instructors and Examiners are Pilots and Cabin crew who are working in Flight Operations. We do have permanent trainers in the ATO/CTR as well. Overall, we have about 50 staff involved in training. Qualifications and experience requirements of Instructors are stated in the regulations. On top of that, we also have additional internal requirements. We have a detailed hiring process for trainers, consisting of evaluations, tests and feedback. The two main categories of trainers are Theoretical Knowledge Instructors (TKI) and Flight Instructors. TKIs are highly qualified and provide training in the various ground training programs. TKIs are selected by the Chief Theoretical Knowledge Instructor (CTKI), who has the overall responsibility to maintain the required standards in all types of ground trainings we provide. Flight Instructors are divided into four groups, namely Line Training Captains (LTC), Type Rating Instructors (TRI), Type Rating Examiners (TRE) and Senior Examiner (SEN). The LTC designation is the starting point of a Pilot who wants to be a Flight Instructor. The Chief Flight Instructor (CFI) has the overall responsibility for the selection of Flight Instructors and to maintain standards of Flight Instruction provided. To become a CFI a Captain has to work his or her way up, starting as an LTC. So, we do have the ability and experience within the Company.

*"A pilot may experience changes in wind, water and weather conditions on the same day at the same location"*

**Island Skies: What areas are covered in ground training?**

Jiffy: In brief, we conduct Technical Theory Training for all the series of DHC-6 aircraft, Emergency and Safety Equipment Training (ESET), Cockpit Resource Management (CRM), Multi-crew Cooperation (MCC), Security, Safety Management System (SMS), Dangerous Goods Regulations (DGR), Emergency First Response (EFR), Fire Practical and Water Evacuation procedures.

**Island Skies: Do pilots and crew go through all of these each year?**

Jiffy: Yes, some trainings have a recurrent period of 12, 24 and 36 months. For example, technical trainings are valid



for 12 months. All crew members will undergo recurrent trainings conducted in-house.

**Island Skies: How many pilots and crew are there altogether now and how do you schedule their training?**

Jiffry: At the moment we have more than 200 pilots. We are also in the process of increasing this number to 250. Along with 150 cabin crews we will have 400 crew members to be trained per year. In general, a crew member undergoes about eight recurrent trainings/ checks sessions in a year. In addition to this, we also provide trainings to dispatchers and other operational staff. Of course, it is a challenge to schedule all these trainings. However, we have a very robust and effective planning system to ensure that all trainings are completed in a timely manner.

**Island Skies: Are all these trainings mandatory under the Maldives Civil Aviation Regulations?**

Jiffry: Maldivian Civil Aviation Authority (MCAA) has established rules and procedures for crew training, which is listed under MCAR Air Crew and MCAR Air Ops.

We strictly adhere to these regulations. In addition to this, we also have our own policies and procedures to enhance our standards. For example, MCAA requires a trainer or an examiner to be assessed every three years, but we assess them annually. Similarly, we have other procedures established internally to maintain higher standards in the Company.

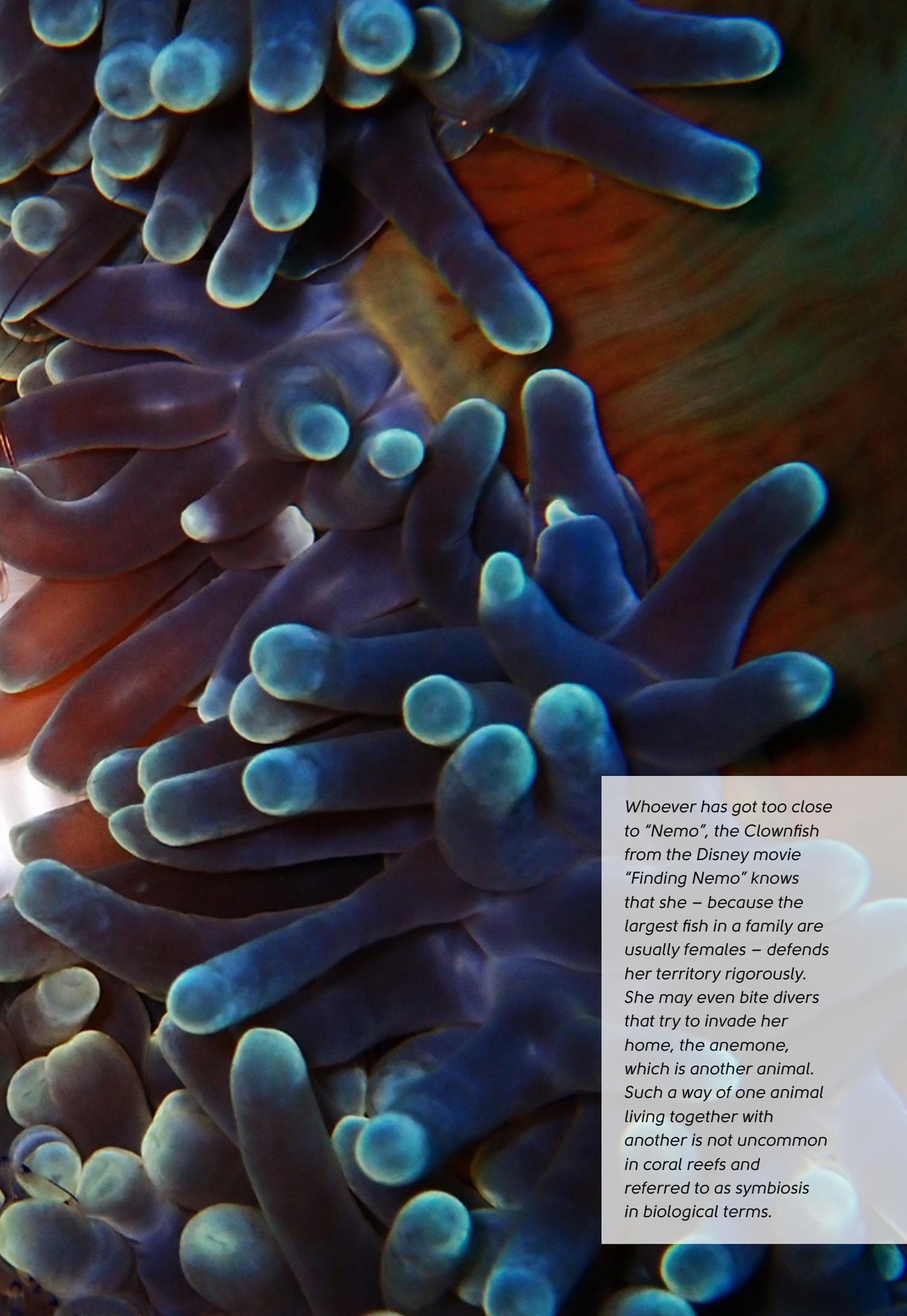
*Jiffry joined TMA in 2001 as a co-pilot and became a captain the next year. In 2004 he started working as a line training captain. Jiffry became the Crew Training Manager in 2011 and in 2013 he was appointed as Head of Training.*

Photo by Aishath Yusfa Athif

# Reef Friendships

by Verena Wiesbauer





*Whoever has got too close to "Nemo", the Clownfish from the Disney movie "Finding Nemo" knows that she – because the largest fish in a family are usually females – defends her territory rigorously. She may even bite divers that try to invade her home, the anemone, which is another animal. Such a way of one animal living together with another is not uncommon in coral reefs and referred to as symbiosis in biological terms.*

A mutualistic symbiosis means that both species involved benefit from that relationship, while a commensal symbiosis means that one species benefits and the other isn't affected. Only the parasitic symbiosis can't really be considered "friendship", since one species benefits and the other is harmed in the process. Let's concentrate here on the first two only as "friendships in coral reefs".

Why live together? Well, there is always competition for food and territory in the animal world. To avoid competing with another species, it is expedient for an animal to find a specific niche within their environment. Another way to avoid direct competition is to form a stable relationship with another species in order to harmoniously share the same space and/or food supply. "Nemo", the clown fish, depends heavily on their host, being unable to breed or survive predation without it. The anemone, on the other hand can survive without its attendant - the Clownfish - although it is hypothesized they may help aerate the tentacles of the anemone, as well as to get rid of parasites.

Great for macro photographers are the Porcelain crabs, that live on stinging sea anemones and are often referred to as Anemone crabs – filter feeders that live and capture their food from within the tentacles of giant anemones, in return for being a great security guard for intruders.

Not to confuse those "Anemone crabs" with "Anemone Hermit crabs" such as *Dardanus*, an animal that snorkellers and divers can observe when swimming out at night with a torch. This clever hermit crab instinctively attaches small stinging sea anemones to its shell, both as camouflage and as a deterrent to possible predators. The anemone, in its turn, gets a "mobile home", allowing it greater exposure to food than it would otherwise have if it stayed stationary. A bit smaller in size, but also taking advantage



*To avoid competing  
with another species  
it is expedient for  
an animal to find a  
specific niche within  
their environment.*



of the stinging anemones is the Boxer crab, which carries a pair of anemones in its claws. When predators approach the Boxer crab, it waves the anemones, which present their stinging tentacles. Because of this behaviour, it is often referred to as "Cheerleader Crab" or "Pom Pom Crab".

What can also easily be observed by both snorkellers and divers is the "Cleaning symbiosis" - a widespread form of mutualistic relationship between a "cleaner" - certain goby, wrasse and shrimp species - and a "client" - a fish such as a parrot fish, a moray eel, a manta ray or a shark. In tropical waters, some areas are quite clearly defined by a large number of stationary cleaner fish and are therefore known as "Cleaning stations". Colour and markings play an important part in recognition of cleaner species, whereby a horizontal stripe is often a sign and affords the owner some immunity

to predation, with many cleaner fish and shrimps even entering the mouth and gills of large, otherwise carnivorous species. Interestingly, some cleaner fish will even attend human "customers". The sign the "customer" has to give is open their mouth at one of the cleaning stations, and the cleaner will do its job. Behaviour plays also an important part in this symbiosis if you have ever seen Parrot, Surgeon or Trigger fish turning to the side at a cleaning station as a signal "clean me, I am ready and I won't eat you!".

Even though jellyfish are a rather rare sight in the Maldives, the commensal symbiosis between fish and those stingers is absolutely fascinating to watch. Especially larger species such as the Fried-Egg Jellyfish, the Moon Jellyfish or the Crown Jellyfish are followed by juvenile Jack mackerels that seek shelter and defense. When in danger of being preyed upon, they even sneak into the sub-genital openings of the

*"Cleaning symbiosis" is a widespread form of mutualistic relationship between a "cleaner" and a "client"*





as the Blue-Spot Longspine urchin *Astropyga radiata*. They gain protection from their host while their host is neither advantaged nor disadvantaged by the relationship. So, when you look closely during your next snorkelling or diving venture into the ocean, you will certainly find several of these symbiotic relationships – they are in fact very common! A healthy reef supports many kinds of symbiotic relationships – even the parasitic ones - but when the reef is stressed by abuse, nature or human, relationships can fail and the reef system will suffer. They are crucial to the success of a coral reef environment, allowing organisms to fit into a niche.

jellyfish where they can be sure to never be followed by predators!

Also easy to observe is a commensal relationship between sea cucumbers of the genus *Stichopus* and Imperial Periclimenes shrimps. The latter usually hitch a ride on the large sea cucumbers, therefore get transported through a large area of potential food with only a minimal expenditure of energy on their part. They can be observed getting off their host cucumber to feed in productive areas, and back on for a ride to the next spot! The Imperial shrimp is also known to ride larger nudibranchs which - although slow moving - afford the shrimp with protection by virtue of their toxic chemical secretions and warning colouration. The shrimp may even assist the nudibranch by removing parasites.

One especially amazing example of commensalism that can be witnessed in a shallow-water sea cucumber – if you look very very closely – is the association with a Pearlfish. The fish spends the day inside the alimentary tract (the intestines) of the sea cucumber, and at night emerges from its anus to feed on small crustaceans! In this

manner, it gets a safe place to live, and while not appearing to gain any benefit from the relationship, the sea cucumber is not harmed.

When diving or snorkelling close to the sandy sea floor, you may have noticed a fish and a shrimp sharing one burrow in the sand. Organisms can indeed use symbiosis in a way of creating housing! Thereby, some animals live in the shelters created by their host. The Arrow Goby, for example, can be found in burrows of several invertebrates, where they feed on the waste of the host, providing the role of housekeeper. At times, the food they find is too large for them to eat, so they give it to the crab, providing their host with meals. This relationship also exists between the Goby and Pistol shrimp. The goby - unable to dig burrows - uses the shrimp burrow as a home, but the nearly blind shrimp - unable to see potential predators - uses the goby as a form of protection. When a Pistol Shrimp predator approaches, the goby fish touches the shrimp with its tail to warn it, then both the shrimp and goby fish retract into the burrow.

Interestingly, other smaller goby fish species live amongst the spines of toxic sea-urchins such

*A healthy reef supports many kinds of symbiotic relationships*



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*From the air it  
is magical and  
breathtakingly  
beautiful*

# Your Pics with TMA

Selection of pictures sent in by our readers

Please send in your pictures to [islandskies@thinkmaldives.com](mailto:islandskies@thinkmaldives.com) with your name, address, date and the route on which the picture was taken.



**Brian Ho**  
from



**Alfredo Apolis**  
from



**Audrey Ng**  
from





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Roters from*



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*Marten Kappel*  
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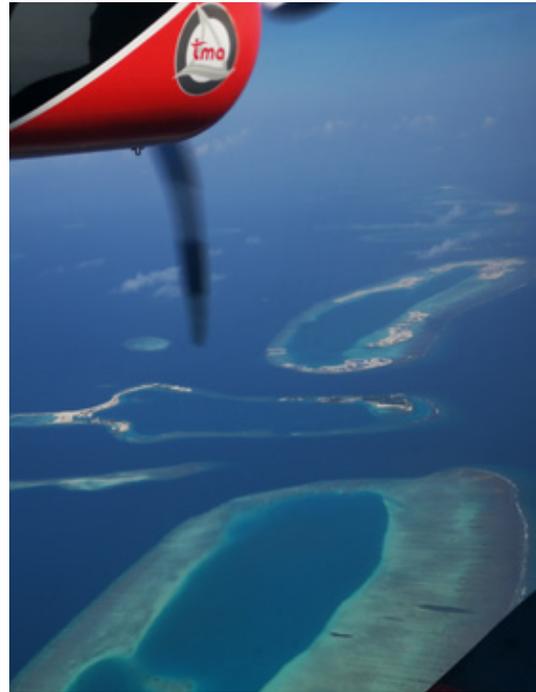


*Shery Goel*  
from





**West & Lis**  
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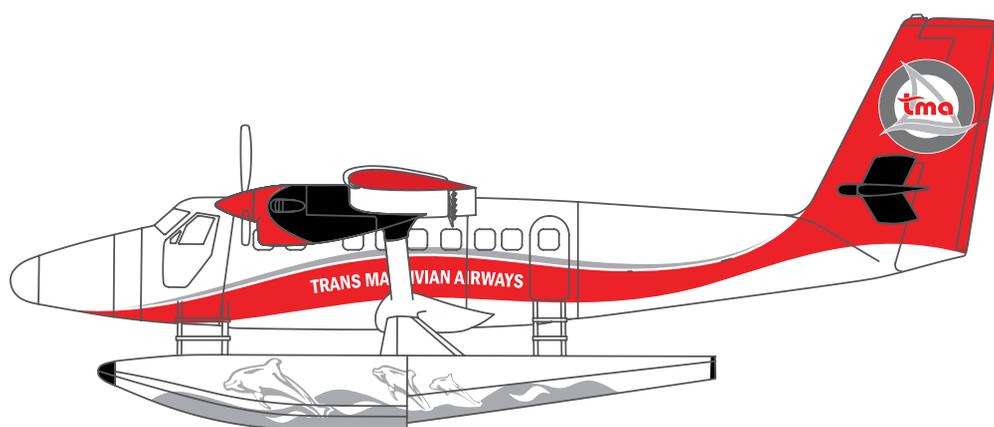
**Katja Hasselkus**  
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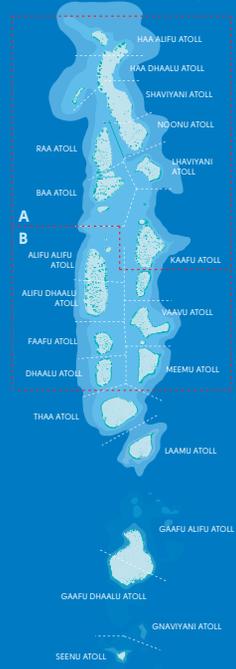
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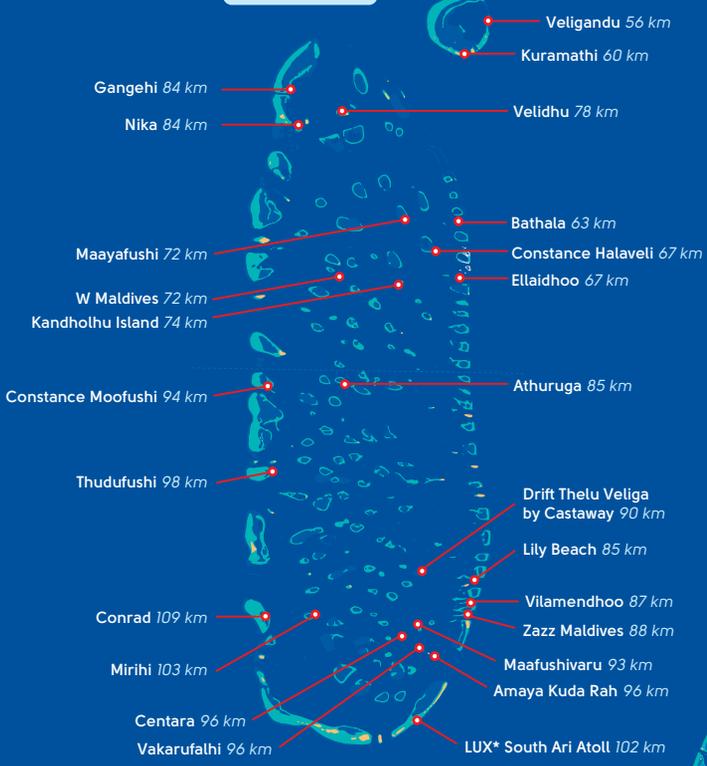
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**SOUTH MALE' ATOLL**

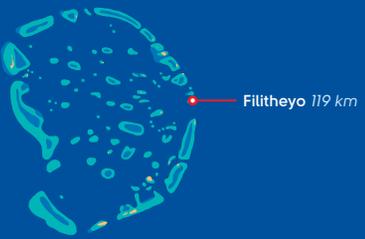


**VAAVU ATOLL**



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