

# Directory

## CONTENTS

Accommodation	173
Business Hours	174
Children	174
Climate Chart	175
Courses	175
Customs	175
Dangers & Annoyances	175
Embassies & Consulates	176
Food	176
Gay & Lesbian Travellers	176
Holidays	176
Insurance	177
Internet Access	177
Legal Matters	177
Maps	177
Money	178
Post	179
Solo Travellers	180
Telephone	180
Time	180
Toilets	180
Tourist Information	180
Travellers With Disabilities	181
Travel Permits	181
Visas	182
Women Travellers	182

## ACCOMMODATION

Ouch. That's most people's reaction to Maldivian resort prices, and it's fair to say this is not and will never be a cheap place to stay. Even budget hotels cost more than a top-end place in India or Sri Lanka, but quality in general is superior to elsewhere in Asia.

In this book we list accommodation for each chapter, divided into three groups: budget, midrange and top end. For each option a bed-and-breakfast room rate is quoted for the height of the season (December to April) unless otherwise stated. There are almost no single rooms, so singles are nearly always doubles for single occupation.

## Resorts

The vast majority of accommodation for travellers consists of the roughly 100 self-contained island resorts throughout the

country. We list all the operating resorts in this book, as well as many that were refurbishing at the time of writing and those that are planned to open during the lifetime of this book.

The government's 'one island, one resort' policy means that development is contained and nowhere in the country feels crowded. Each resort provides rooms, meals and activities for its guests, ranging from the simplest beach huts with a buffet three times a day and a simple diving school to vast water villas with every conceivable luxury in them, à la carte dining and every activity from kiteboarding to big game fishing.

Most resorts have a large selection of room categories, so for the sake of ease we give the rate for the lowest category of room and for the lowest category of water bungalow (if available). These prices also include the US\$8 per person per night government bed tax and a 10% service charge.

Also, be aware that these are rack rates, ie those given to fully independent travellers (FITs) who book direct with the resort. Any travel agency that has a contract with the resort will have access to far lower rates.

Budget resorts (up to US\$240 per double room per night) tend to be busier and more basic in their facilities and sophistication than more expensive resorts. Few budget resorts are being built these days so those that do exist tend to be dated from the 1980s or '90s, and are often in need of a lick of paint.

Midrange resorts (from US\$240 to US\$500 per night) make up the majority of the Maldives accommodation options. They are noticeably slicker, better run and have a better standard of facilities and accommodation, all carried off with some style.

Top-end resorts (more than US\$500 per night) are currently what the Maldives is all about. The world-class standards are uniform in this category and range from the very good to the mind-bogglingly luxurious.

**BOOK ACCOMMODATION ONLINE**

For more accommodation reviews and recommendations by Lonely Planet authors, check out the online booking service at [www.lonelyplanet.com](http://www.lonelyplanet.com). You'll find the true, insider lowdown on the best places to stay. Reviews are thorough and independent. Best of all, you can book online.

Booking resorts through travel agents is nearly always cheaper than doing so directly. However, with the (slow) rise of independent travel in the Maldives, some resorts offer some great deals via their websites.

**Hotels**

The only hotels in the country are located in the capital Male'. As these are far cheaper than the island resorts, we've used a separate price breakdown for the capital's hotels: budget (under US\$50), mid-range (US\$50 to US\$80) and top end (over US\$80). The choice is not inspiring and the rooms are often cramped due to the shortage of space (see p98).

**Safari Boats**

Live-aboard safari boats allow you to travel extensively throughout the country, visiting great dive sites, desert islands and small local settlements usually too remote to see travellers. Live-aboards also range from simple to luxury. The advantage is that you can visit many places off-limits to resort travellers, dive in pristine places and enjoy a very sociable atmosphere. Prices range from bargain basement to exorbitant depending on the facilities available (see p58).

**Inhabited Islands**

There's no commercial accommodation in the island villages, and visitors are not legally permitted to pay for a place to stay. If for whatever reason you do stay on an inhabited island, you'll be put up in the house of the *kateeb* (island chief), or a house maintained for the purpose of accommodating guests.

**BUSINESS HOURS**

Male' is really the only place you have to worry about business hours in the Maldives, the resorts being far more flexible

in these terms with hoards needing to be catered for.

The working week elsewhere in the Maldives runs from Sunday to Thursday. Friday and to a lesser extent Saturday are rest days and it's advisable to avoid Male' and local islands on Fridays as they become like ghost towns. On work days, businesses operate from 8am or 9am until 5pm or 6pm, but this varies. Shops in Male' will often stay open until around 10pm or 11pm, and some will shut in the heat of the afternoon – from midday until 3pm or thereabouts. Nearly all Male' businesses stop several times a day for prayers, which can be frustrating for shoppers, as businesses suddenly close up for about half an hour. Most banks in Male' are open from about 8am to 1.30pm, Sunday to Thursday, or 9.30am to 12.30pm during Ramazan.

Government offices are open Sunday to Thursday from 7.30am to 2pm. During Ramazan, hours are from 9am to 1.30pm.

Teashops can open very early or close very late. During Ramazan the places where locals eat will probably be closed during daylight hours, but will bustle after dark.

**CHILDREN**

Younger children will enjoy a couple of weeks on a Maldivian resort island, particularly if they like playing in the water and on the beach. Though exotic cuisine is sometimes on the menu, there are always some pretty standard Western-style dishes that kids will find OK.

Older children and teenagers could find a resort a little confining after a few days and they may get bored. Canoeing and fishing trips might provide some diversion, while a course in sailing or windsurfing could be a great way to spend a holiday. Table tennis, tennis, volleyball or badminton might also appeal. The minimum age for scuba diving is 16 years, but most resorts offer a 'bubble blowers' introduction for younger kids, which is very popular.

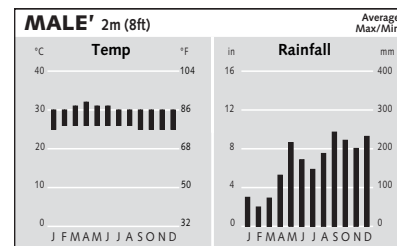
The main danger is sunburn, so bring sun hats and sunblock. Lycra swim shirts are an excellent idea – they can be worn on the beach and in the water and block out most UV radiation.

**Practicalities**

Be aware that many resorts do not encourage young children – check with the resort directly – and that children under five are often banned from honeymoon resorts. Where kids are welcome, it's no problem booking cots and organising high chairs in restaurants, and there's often a babysitting service and kids club in bigger, family-oriented resorts. Nappies are available in Male', but usually not in resorts, so bring all the nappies and formula you'll need for the duration of the holiday. Breast-feeding should only be done in private.

**CLIMATE CHART**

The Maldives has a tropical climate distinguished by two seasons, or monsoons: the dry northeast monsoon from December to March, and the wet southwestern monsoon from May to November, with more strong winds and rain. April is a transitional period noted for clear water and heat. The temperature remains remarkably consistent at around 30°C. For more on weather, see p12.

**COURSES**

Diving courses are a particular attraction for travellers to the Maldives. The standard learn-to-dive course is an open-water certificate, but the bigger dive centres offer a host of advanced and speciality courses, including advanced open water, divemaster, night diving and so on (see p66 for more information).

**CUSTOMS**

The immigration cards issued to you on your flight to Male' include a great list of items that are banned from the republic. Alcohol, pornography, pork, narcotics, dogs, firearms, spear guns and 'idols of worship'

cannot be brought into the country and you're advised to comply. Baggage is always X-rayed and may be searched carefully, and if you have any liquor it will be taken and held for you till you're about to leave the country. This service will not extend to other prohibited items, and the importation of multiple bibles, pornography and in particular, drugs, will be treated very seriously.

The export of turtle shell, or any turtle-shell products, is forbidden.

**DANGERS & ANNOYANCES**

It's hard to imagine anywhere much safer than the Maldives. Theft from resorts is very rare, given that only staff and guests have access to the resort island; but still, make use of the safes in the rooms, keep your doors locked and don't leave cash around wherever you are.

The most likely danger is sunburn – don't ever underestimate the power of the equatorial sun at midday on a bright, cloudless afternoon. Sadly many people do, and receive bad burning and exposure to dangerous UV rays. Ensure you sunbathe with a high-factor lotion the first couple of days and be particularly careful when snorkelling or travelling by boat (when the breeze can make it seem far cooler than it is).

Second to the sun is the water. While it's true most diving accidents happen on the diving boat, it's extremely important to take diving seriously.

Don't touch coral, shells or fish. Beware of the possibility of strong currents and don't swim too far out from an island's fringing reef, or too far from a boat on a snorkelling trip. Don't try surfing unless you know where you are and what you're doing – the surf breaks over coral reefs and you could be badly grazed, or knocked unconscious.

It would be unlucky to be hit by a falling coconut, but it does happen, more so in windy weather. Imagine a 2kg coconut falling 15m onto your head. Check if a coconut tree is laden with big coconuts before lying underneath it.

Crimes of violence are very unusual, but there are burglaries and theft in the capital. There are very few cases of theft from resort rooms. Nevertheless, it's wise

to deposit your valuables with the resort office, to keep your room locked and not leave cash lying around.

## EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

### Maldives Embassies & Consulates

Maldivian diplomatic representatives overseas include:

**Australia** (☎ 03-9349 1473; linton@iimetro.com.au; 164 Gatehouse Street Parkville, Vic 3052)

**Austria** (☎ 013-696 64 40; weidler.1882@magnet.at; Weima Rer Strasse 104, A-1190 Vienna)

**Belgium** (☎ 01 06 892 12; Clos des Genets 17, 1325 Chaumont Gistoux)

**Germany** (☎ 069-2740 44 20; info@visitmaldives.de; Bethmannstrasse 58, 60311 Frankfurt am Main)

**Japan** (☎ 033-94 26222; 1-26-1 Otowa, Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo 112-865)

**Singapore** (☎ 62258955; maldives@cyberway.com.sg; 10 Anson Rd, No 18-12 International Plaza)

**Sri Lanka** (☎ 015-516302; www.maldiveshighcom.lk; 23 Kavirathne Place, Colombo 6)

**South Africa** (☎ 021-797 9940; 69 Totnes Rd, Plumstead 7800, Cape Town)

**UK** (☎ 020 7224 2135; www.maldiveshighcommission.org; 22 Nottingham Place, London W1U 5NJ)

**UN** (☎ 212-599-6195; maldives@un.int; 800 Second Avenue, Ste 400-E, New York, NY 10017)

## Embassies & Consulates in the Maldives

The foreign representatives in Male' are mostly honorary consuls with limited powers and often nobody in residence. If it's an emergency, then contact your country's embassy or high commission in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

**Sweden, Denmark, Finland & Norway** (Map p94; ☎ 3315174; Abdulla Saeed, Cypra, 25 Boduthakuru faanu Magu)

**Germany & Austria** (Map pp90-1; ☎ 3322971; Ibrahim Maniku, Universal Enterprises, 38 Orchid Magu)

**India** (Map p94; ☎ 3323016; Ameer Ahmed Magu)

**Italy** (Map p94; ☎ 3322451; Bandhu Ibrahim Saleem, Cypra, 25 Boduthakuru faanu Magu)

**Netherlands** (Map p94; ☎ 3323609; 1/1 Fareedhee Magu)

**New Zealand** (Map p94; ☎ 3322432; 30 Boduthakuru faanu Magu)

**UK** (Map pp90-1; ☎ 3311205; c/o Dhiraagu, Majeedee Magu)

## FOOD

See p84 for information about food in the Maldives.

## GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELLERS

This is a grey area legally in the Maldives, where gay awareness can hardly be said to be very high. By Maldivian law all extra-marital sex is illegal although such mores are not applied to the resorts, where in practice anything goes as long as it is low key or behind closed doors. Same-sex couples will be able to book a double room with no questions asked (from budget to luxury, Maldivian hotel staff are the model of discretion) and it's common to see same sex-couples enjoying Maldivian holidays, although no resort here markets itself to the gay market specifically. Public displays of affection may embarrass Maldivian resort staff, but won't result in anything but blushes on their part. In Male' and on inhabited islands discretion is key and public displays of affection should not be indulged in by anyone, gay or straight – the Maldives remains an extremely conservative place.

## HOLIDAYS

If you're in a resort, Maldivian holidays will not affect you – service will be as normal. If you visit Male' or an inhabited island on a holiday, you might see some parade or public celebration, shops may not open or may open late in the day, and government offices and most businesses will be closed. Christmas, New Year, Easter and European school holidays will affect you more – they're the busiest times for tourists and bring the highest resort prices, although locals don't celebrate them, of course.

If a holiday falls on a Friday or Saturday, the next working day will be declared a holiday 'on the occasion of' whatever it was. Most Maldivian holidays are based on the Islamic lunar calendar and the dates vary from year to year.

**Ramazan** Known as Ramazan or *roarda mas* in the Maldives rather than Ramadan, the Islamic month of fasting is an important religious occasion that starts on a new moon and continues for 28 days. Expected starting dates for the next few years are 13 September 2007, 2 September 2008, 22 August 2009, 11 August 2010. The exact date depends on the sighting of the new moon in Mecca and can vary by a day or so either way.

**Kuda Eid** Also called Id-ul-Fitr or Fith'r Eid, this occurs at the end of Ramazan, with the sighting of the new moon, and is celebrated with a feast.

**Bodu Eid** Also called Eid-ul-Al'haa, the Festival of the sacrifice, 66 days after the end of Ramazan, this is the time when many Muslims begin the pilgrimage (hajj) to Mecca. **National Day** A commemoration of the day Mohammed Thakuru faanu and his men overthrew the Portuguese on Male' in 1578. It's on the first day of the third month of the lunar calendar.

**Prophet's Birthday** The birthday of the Prophet Mohammed is celebrated with three days of eating and merriment. The approximate start dates for the next few years are: 31 March 2007, 20 March 2008, 9 March 2009, and 26 Feb 2010.

**Huravee Day** The day the Malabars of India were kicked out by Sultan Hassan Izzuddeen after their brief occupation in 1752.

**Martyr's Day** Commemorates the death of Sultan Ali Vi at the hands of the Portuguese in 1558.

The following are fixed holiday dates:

**New Year's Day** 1 January

**Independence Day** Celebrates the ending of the British protectorate on 26 and 27 July.

**Victory Day** Celebrates the victory over the Sri Lankan mercenaries who tried to overthrow the Maldivian government in 1988. A military march is followed by lots of schoolchildren doing drills and traditional dances, and more entertaining floats and costumed processions on 3 November.

**Republic Day** Commemorates the second (current) republic, founded in 1968 on 11 November. Celebrated in Male' with lots of pomp, brass bands and parades. Sometimes the following day is also a holiday.

## INSURANCE

A travel-insurance policy to cover theft, loss and medical problems is highly recommended. Some policies offer lower and higher medical-expense options; the higher ones are chiefly for countries which have high medical costs, and this would be a good idea for a Maldives trip. You may prefer to choose a policy that pays doctors or hospitals directly rather than your having to pay on the spot and claim later. If you have to claim later, make sure you keep all documentation. Some policies ask you to call back (reverse charge) to a centre in your home country where an immediate assessment of your problem is made.

Some policies specifically exclude 'dangerous activities', which can include diving, so check your policy carefully if you plan to dive. See p70 for information on insurance for divers.

Worldwide cover for travellers from over 44 countries is available online at [www.lonelyplanet.com/travel\\_services](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/travel_services).

## INTERNET ACCESS

Most resorts have Internet access available for guests. In the top-end resorts this will typically be free and may include a wi-fi area for people with their own laptops and an airport card. In other resorts Internet use is paid for, and rates can vary enormously.

Elsewhere in the Maldives, Internet cafés and wi-fi hotspots provide customers with Web access. Prices are extremely low and in the case of wi-fi hotspots in Male', free.

## LEGAL MATTERS

Alcohol is illegal outside resorts – you're theoretically not even allowed to take a can of beer out on a boat trip. Some foreign residents in the capital have a liquor permit, which entitles them to a limited amount per month, strictly for personal consumption at home.

Illicit drugs are around, but are not widespread. Penalties are heavy. 'Brown sugar', a semirefined form of heroin, has become a problem among some young people in the capital and even in some outer islands.

With a scattered island population and limited resources, the Maldivian authorities rely heavily on delegation. Apart from the police and the military, there is a chief on every atoll and island who must keep an eye on what is happening, report to the central government and be responsible for the actions of local people.

Every foreigner in the country has, in effect, a Maldivian minder who is responsible for him or her. Resorts are responsible for their guests and for what happens on their island. If a guest goes swimming in the nude, the resort can be fined as well as the visitor.

## MAPS

Put simply, the Maldives is a nightmare to map. The islands are so small and scattered that the result is an extremely confusing one in which you're forever trying to distinguish between the tiny islands and the reefs that surround them. Another problem is scale – the country is over 800km from north to south, but the largest island is only about 8km long.

Several tourist maps are available in Male' and in resort shops, and while they rather misleadingly only feature the atolls in the tourist zone (ie not even half of the country) they are by far the most useful and practical for anyone travelling in the Maldives. The two standard issues are *Divers & Travellers Maldives Map* (Atoll Editions) and *Satellite Map of the Maldives* (Edition MM). The former is the better of the two, with far more detail and also including an overview map of all the atolls. The latter is good for locating resorts.

For anyone doing any serious amount of travel, especially diving, *Atlas of the Maldives* (Atoll Editions) is indispensable and in a very practical book form, alleviating the need to fold out a vast map. It includes everything from shipwreck sites to Protected Marine Area plans. It's on sale at the Novelty Bookshop (p89) in Male'.

## MONEY

The currency of the Maldives is the rufiya, which is divided into 100 larees. Notes come in denominations of 500, 100, 50, 20, 10, five and two rufiya, but the last two are uncommon. Coins are in denominations of two and one rufiya, and 50, 25 and 10 larees. The value of the rufiya is pegged to that of the US dollar, so the exchange rate between the two currencies never changes. Most hotel and travel expenses will be billed in dollars. If you're staying in a resort, all extras (including diving costs) will be billed to your room, and you pay the day before departure. Resorts accept cash, credit cards or travellers cheques in all major currencies, although US dollars are preferred.

See the Quick Reference inside the front cover for other exchange rates. See also p13 for information on costs.

## ATMs

There's a slowly growing number of ATMs in Male' – most of them (but not all) now allow you to withdraw funds from international accounts. Those that definitely do are those outside the major banks on Boduthakurufaanu Magu in Male'. Note that while you can do cash advances on credit cards over the counter at Male' airport and at most resorts, there are no ATMs outside Male'.

## Cash

It's perfectly possible to have a holiday in the Maldives without ever touching cash of any sort, as in resorts everything will be chalked up to your room number and paid by credit card or travellers cheques on departure. However, it's a good idea to have some cash with you – small-denomination US dollars are most handy for tipping staff and buying sundries in transit. You won't need Maldivian rufiya unless you're using local shops and services. Even these will usually take dollars, but you'll be given change in rufiya.

There are no restrictions on changing money into rufiya, but there's no need to change a lot. Rufiya are not readily negotiable outside the country, so reconvert any leftovers at the bank counter in the airport when you leave.

## Credit Cards

Every resort takes major credit cards including Visa, Amex and MasterCard. A week of diving and drinking could easily run up a tab over US\$2000, so make sure your credit limit can stand it. The cashier may want 24 hours' notice to check your credit. Many resorts apply a surcharge of 5% to credit-card payments, so it may be best to have enough travellers cheques to cover the bulk of your extras bill.

## International Transfers

Banks in the Maldives are not noted for their efficiency in international transactions. A transfer using the 'Swift' system seems to be the most efficient way to get money to the Maldives. Villa Travels is the agent for **Western Union** (Map p94; ☎ 3329990; moneytransfer@villatravels.com; Boduthakurufaanu Magu), one reliable but expensive way to transfer funds. The **HSBC Bank** (Map p94; Boduthakurufaanu Magu) might be your best bet. Try to have the money handed over to you in US dollars, not rufiya.

## Tipping

Tipping is something of a grey area in the Maldives, where 10% service tax is added to nearly everything from minibar drinks to room prices. In many places this would mean that you don't need to tip in addition, but it's still the case that people serving you personally will often expect

something. It's good form to leave a tip for your room staff and in smarter resorts, your *thakuru* (butler). Give any tips to the staff personally, not to the hotel cashier – US dollars, euros and local currency are equally acceptable. A few dollars a day is fine for room staff, while anyone carrying your bags might expect US\$1 or so per bag.

In Male' the fancier restaurants usually add a 10% service charge, so you don't need to tip. Tipping is not customary in local teashops. Taxi drivers are not tipped, but porters at the airport expect Rf10 or US\$1.

## Travellers Cheques

Banks in Male' will change travellers cheques and cash in US dollars, and possibly UK pounds, euros, Japanese yen and Swiss francs. Most will change US-dollar travellers cheques into US dollars cash with a commission of US\$5. Changing travellers cheques to Maldivian rufiya should not attract a commission.

Some of the authorised moneychangers around town will exchange US-dollar or euro travellers cheques at times when the banks are closed. You can always try some of the hardware shops, souvenir shops and guesthouses. Most tourist businesses will accept US dollars in cash at the standard rate, and euros at reasonable rates.

## POST

Postal services are quite efficient, with mail to overseas destinations delivered promptly; mail from overseas, especially packets and parcels, is subject to customs screening and can take considerably longer. The new **main post office** (Boduthakurufaanu Magu; ☎ 8.15am-9pm Sun-Thu, 3-9pm Fri, 9.15am-9pm Sat) in Male' has a poste restante service.

To send a postcard anywhere overseas costs Rf10 and a standard airmail letter to most countries costs Rf12. A high-speed EMS service is available to many countries. Parcel rates can be quite expensive and will

## PRACTICALITIES

### NEWSPAPERS & MAGAZINES

The three Maldivian daily papers are Aufathis, Miadhu and Haveeru, all costing Rf2 and available from shops throughout the country, although rarely in resorts. They all have some pages in English, although there's nothing of much interest. The Evening Weekly ([www.eveningweekly.com.mv](http://www.eveningweekly.com.mv)) is the country's most popular English-language current-affairs magazine, but its articles are fairly uninspiring – this is hardly the home of crusading journalism. A smattering of international papers and magazines are available from bookshops in Male'.

### RADIO & TV

TVM, the national TV station, is broadcast from Male' during the day, with regular breaks for prayer and much religious content. The rest of the schedule is made up of He-Man reruns, local news and CNN rebroadcasts in English.

Nearly all resorts and Male' hotels have satellite TV including BBC World, CNN, Star Movies and HBO alongside Sri Lankan, Indian and European channels.

The Voice of Maldives Radio ([www.vom.gov.mv](http://www.vom.gov.mv)) is broadcast to the whole country for 11 hours each day on medium wave, 1449kHz, and also at 89MHz. The news, in English, is read at 6pm for 15 minutes.

### ELECTRICITY

Electricity supply is 220V to 240V, 50Hz AC. The standard socket is the UK-style three-pin, although there are some variations so an international adaptor can be useful (or essential for non-UK travellers).

### WEIGHTS & MEASURES

Although the Maldives is officially converting to the metric system, imperial measures are widely used. Metric measurements are used in this book.



have to clear customs at the main post office, where a bored-looking customs official will be stationed to inspect any packages you're sending home.

At the resorts you can buy stamps and postcards at the shop or the reception desk. Generally there is a mailbox near reception.

## SOLO TRAVELLERS

While travelling on your own through the Maldives can feel akin to spending Valentine's Day alone in a romantic French restaurant, it's perfectly possible and many people do it. As there are almost no single rooms in the country's resorts and hotels, you'll find that you'll be paying much more than someone in a couple, as often the reductions for single occupation are tiny. However, if you can afford to, there's nothing stopping you, and if – like most single travellers in the country – you're here for a specific reason such as diving or surfing, you'll quickly meet up with kindred spirits in the resorts where these activities are most popular. Safari boats are likewise a great option as the sociable nature makes them good for making friends. Single women will find the Maldives a wonderful place to travel, completely free of the chauvinism that can so often be a deterrent. For more on independent travel, see p52.

## TELEPHONE

There are two telephone providers operating in the Maldives: the relatively old-timer Dhiraagu, a joint venture of the government and the British Cable & Wireless company; and the newer Wataniya, a Kuwaiti provider that introduced some much-needed competition to the market in 2005.

Both providers operate somewhat patchy coverage, although given the unique geography of the country this is hardly surprising. Only in and around Male' are you 100% guaranteed a signal, where it's hit and miss elsewhere. You can buy a local SIM card for around US\$15 and use it in your own phone if it's been unlocked at home (check with your provider) – this becomes worth the price almost immediately if you're using your phone much at all.

Every inhabited island now has a telephone connection, and very modern card-operated telephone boxes can be seen somewhat incongruously on the most traditional island

streets. Every business in Male' is on the phone, telephone cards are widely available, and card phones are numerous.

All resorts have IDD phones, either in the rooms or available at reception. Charges vary from high to astronomical, starting around US\$15 for three minutes; our advice is never to use them outside of an emergency.

The international country code for the Maldives is ☎960. All Maldives numbers have seven digits and there are no area codes. If you find you have a six-digit number for a Male' business, add a 3 to the start and it should work. Operator and directory inquiry numbers are ☎110 for the Maldives and ☎190 for international inquiries. To make an international call, dial ☎00, then the country code, area code and number.

## TIME

The Maldives is five hours ahead of GMT, in the same time zone as Pakistan. When it's noon in the Maldives, it's 7am in London, 8am in Berlin and Rome, 12.30pm in India and Sri Lanka, 3pm in Singapore and 4pm in Tokyo.

The majority of resorts operate one hour ahead of Male' time to give their guests the illusion of extra daylight in the evening and a longer sleep in the morning. This can make it tricky when arranging pick-up times and transfers, so always check whether you're being quoted a time in Male' Time or Resort Time.

## TOILETS

Male's public toilets charge Rf2. On local islands, you may have to ask where the *fahana* is. In general you're better off using toilets in cafés and restaurants in Male' – they're usually cleaner and free.

## TOURIST INFORMATION

The official tourist office is the **Maldives Tourism Promotion Board** (☎3323228; www.visitmaldives.com; Boduthakurufaanu Magu, Male'). Its office on the 4th floor of the Bank of Ceylon building has maps and other printed material, and can answer specific inquiries.

The Maldives has only one official tourist office abroad: the **Maldives Tourism Promotion Board** (☎69-2740-4420; info@visitmaldives.de; Bethmannstrasse 58, 60311 Frankfurt am Main, Germany). Most tourism promotion is done by private travel agents, tour operators and resorts.

## TRAVELLERS WITH DISABILITIES

At Male' International Airport, passengers must use steps to get on and off planes, so contact your airline to find out what arrangements can be made. The arrivals area is all at ground level, but departure usually involves going up and down stairs.

Transfers to nearby resorts are by dhoni or speedboat and a person in a wheelchair or with limited mobility will need assistance. Transfer to more distant resorts is often by seaplanes, which can be more difficult to access, but staff are quite experienced in assisting passengers in wheelchairs or with limited mobility.

Most resorts have few steps, ground-level rooms and reasonably smooth paths to beaches, boat jetties and all public areas. Staff will be on hand to assist disabled guests. When you decide on a resort, call them directly and ask about the layout. It's usually a good idea for guests to advise the tour agency of any special needs, but if you want to find out about specific facilities, it's best to contact the resort itself.

Quite a few resort activities are potentially suitable for disabled guests, apart from the very popular sitting-on-a-beach-doing-nothing. Fishing trips and excursions to inhabited islands should be easy, but uninhabited islands may be more difficult to disembark on. Catamaran sailing and canoeing are possibilities, especially if you've had experience in these activities. Anyone who can swim will be able to enjoy snorkelling. The **International Association for Handicapped Divers** (www.iahd.org) provides advice and assistance for anyone with a physical disability who wishes to scuba dive. Resort dive schools should be able to arrange a special course or programme for any group of four or more people with a similar disability.

No dogs are permitted in the Maldives, so it's not a destination for anyone dependent on a guide dog.

## TRAVEL PERMITS

Foreigners must have an Inter-Atoll Travel Permit to stay on any inhabited island other than Male' or a resort island, and permits are also required to visit all uninhabited islands outside the tourism zone. You don't need a permit for a day trip organised by a resort.

Permits are issued by the **Ministry of Atolls Administration** (Map p94; Boduthakurufaanu Magu) in Male' and cost Rf10. All foreigners must have a local sponsor who will guarantee their accommodation and be responsible for them. Note also that it is illegal for anyone to request payment for accommodation on an inhabited island.

Permit applications must be in writing, and include the applicant's name, passport number, nationality, the name of the island/atoll to be visited, dates of visit, name and address of sponsor, the name and registration number of the vessel to be used, and the purpose of the visit.

If you are going on a diving or sightseeing safari trip through the atolls in a registered vessel with a registered safari company, the company will obtain the necessary permits before you start. In effect, the company is acting as your sponsor and supplying accommodation on the boat.

Your sponsor should be a resident of the island you wish to visit, and must be prepared to vouch for you, feed you and accommodate you. This support must be given in writing, preferably with an OK from the *kateeb* and submitted with your application. It's best to have the sponsor submit the application on your behalf.

The most straightforward way to visit the outer atolls is with a registered safari boat, but a reputable tour company, travel agent or guesthouse proprietor may be able to help you make the necessary contacts to get a sponsor. Many Male' residents have friends or family in various outer atolls, but as they will be responsible for you when you visit the island, a great deal of trust is involved. Getting a letter of support-cum-invitation back from the island can take a couple of weeks if it's isolated from the capital.

The stated purpose of the visit can be something like visiting friends, sightseeing, photography or private research. The permit will specify which atolls or islands you can visit. Permits are issued only between 8.30am and 11am on all days except government holidays.

As soon as you land on an island you must go to the island office to present the permit. A foreigner travelling in the outer atolls without a permit, or breaching its conditions, can be fined Rf100.

## VISAS

The Maldives welcomes visitors from all countries, issuing a 30-day stamp on arrival. Citizens of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh or Nepal are given a 90-day stamp. If you want to stay longer you'll either need to apply for a visa or leave the country when your 30 days is up, then return.

While officially you're supposed to show US\$30 for every day's stay, this is not usually enforced, and showing a credit card will usually placate concerns. However, you should know the name of your hotel and be able to show a return air ticket out of the country, if asked by immigration officials.

### Visa Extensions

To apply for an extension, go to the **Immigration Office** (Map p94; ☎ 3323913; ☎ 8am-1pm Sun-Thu) in the Huravee Building next to the police station in Male'. You must first buy an Extension of Tourist Visa form (Rf10) from the ground-floor desk. You'll need a local to sponsor you. The main requirement is evidence that you have accommodation, so it's best to have your resort, travel agent or guesthouse manager act as a sponsor and apply on your behalf. Have your sponsor sign the form, and bring it back to the office between 7.30am and 9.30am, along with your passport, a passport photo, the Rf750 fee and your air ticket out of the country. You have to have a confirmed booking for the new departure date before you can get the extension – fortunately, the airlines don't ask to see a visa extension before they'll change the date of your flight. Proof of sufficient funds (US\$30 per day) or a credit card may also be required. You'll be asked to leave the documents at the office and return

in a couple of days to pick up the passport with its extended visa (get a receipt for your passport).

Extensions are for a maximum of 30 days, but they give you only until the date on your ticket – the cost is the same, for one day or 30. Overstaying your visa (or extension), even by an hour, can be a major hassle as they may not let you board your flight, and you will have to go back to Male', book another flight, get a visa extension and pay a fine before you can leave.

### WOMEN TRAVELLERS

Culturally, resorts are European enclaves and visiting women will not have to make too many adjustments. Topless bathing and nudity are strictly forbidden, but brief bikinis are perfectly acceptable on resort beaches.

Reasonably modest dress is appropriate in Male' – shorts should cover the thighs and shirts should not be very low cut. Women may be stared at on the street in Male', especially if their dress or demeanour is seen as provocative, but nothing more serious is likely to happen. Local women don't go into teashops in Male', but a foreign woman with a male companion would not cause any excitement.

In more out-of-the-way parts of the country, quite conservative dress is in order. It is very unlikely that a foreign woman would be harassed or feel threatened on a local island, as Maldivian men are conservative and extremely respectful. They are very closed, small communities and the fact that a foreign woman would be associated with a local sponsor should give a high level of security.

# Transport

## CONTENTS

<b>Getting There &amp; Away</b>	<b>183</b>
Entering the Country	183
Air	183
Sea	184
<b>Getting Around</b>	<b>185</b>
Air	185
Boat	186
Car & Motorcycle	186

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

Flights, tours and rail tickets can be booked online at [www.lonelyplanet.com/travel\\_services](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/travel_services).

### ENTERING THE COUNTRY

Entering the Maldives is simple and hassle-free. However, you must know the name of your resort or Male' hotel, and if you are travelling independently and don't have one arranged, then be prepared to make one up – the immigration officials will view anyone just arriving in the country with great suspicion.

### Passport

There are no restrictions on foreign nationals entering the country. Israelis and people who have Israeli stamps in their passports are perfectly welcome, which is rare in the Muslim world. Visas are not needed for visits of 30 days or less (see opposite). Theoretically travellers must have US\$30 per day for the duration of their stay.

### AIR Airports & Airlines

At the time of writing there was only one international airport in the Maldives – **Male' International Airport** (MLE; ☎ 3322075; [www.airports.com.mv](http://www.airports.com.mv)), on the island of Hulhule', 2km across the water from the capital. It's a decent airport that was being upgraded to include new departure and arrival areas at the time

of research. The current domestic terminal on the southern island of Gan is also being upgraded to a new international airport, and should be taking international charter flights some time in the near future.

There is no national carrier; the carriers serving Male' can roughly be divided into scheduled and charter airlines. Some airlines only fly in certain seasons and the list of charter airlines changes frequently.

### SCHEDULED AIRLINES

**Austrian** (OS; ☎ 3334004; [www.aua.com](http://www.aua.com))

**Emirates** (EK; ☎ 3315465; [www.emirates.com](http://www.emirates.com))

**Air India** (Map p94; IC; ☎ 3310111; [www.airindia.com](http://www.airindia.com))

**Malaysian Airlines** (MH; ☎ 3332555; [www.malaysiaairlines.com](http://www.malaysiaairlines.com))

**Qatar Airways** (Map p94; QR; ☎ 3334777; [www.qatarairways.com](http://www.qatarairways.com))

**Singapore Airlines** (Map p94; SQ; ☎ 3310031; [www.singaporeairlines.com](http://www.singaporeairlines.com))

**Sri Lankan Airlines** (Map p94; UL; ☎ 3310031; [www.srilankan.aero](http://www.srilankan.aero))

**Transaero** (UN; [www.transaero.ru](http://www.transaero.ru); Male' airport)

### CHARTERED AIRLINES

Note that most charter airlines don't have offices in Male' and should be contacted via the home country.

**Britannia Airways** (BY; [www.thomsonfly.com](http://www.thomsonfly.com))

**Blue Panorama Airlines** (BV; [www.blue-panorama.com](http://www.blue-panorama.com))

**Condor** (DE; [www5.condor.com](http://www5.condor.com))

**Corsair** (SS; ☎ 3310111; [www.corsair.fr](http://www.corsair.fr))

**Edelweiss** (EDW; [www.edelweissair.ch](http://www.edelweissair.ch))

**Eurofly** (GJ; [www.eurofly.it](http://www.eurofly.it))

### THINGS CHANGE...

The information in this chapter is particularly vulnerable to change. Check directly with the airline or a travel agent to make sure you understand how a fare (and ticket you may buy) works and be aware of the security requirements for international travel. Shop carefully. The details given in this chapter should be regarded as pointers and are not a substitute for your own careful, up-to-date research.

**First Choice** (FCA; www.firstchoice.co.uk)

**LTU** (LT; ☎ 3334004; www.ltu.com)

**Martinair** (MP; ☎ 3323069; www.martinair.com)

**Monarch** (MON; www.flymonarch.com)

**Neos Spa** (NO; www.neosair.it)

## Tickets

If you're on a package you'll usually have no choice about the airline you fly, as it will be part of the package. Fully independent travellers (FITs) should shop around for both scheduled and charter deals. More and more chartered airlines are selling flight-only seats and these can be good deals. The other advantage of charter flights is that you can fly direct from Western Europe to Male', without the usual change in the Middle East or Sri Lanka common for scheduled airlines.

## Australia

Australians usually reach the Maldives via Singapore or Kuala Lumpur on Singapore Airlines, Malaysia Airlines, Qantas or a combination. The few Australian visitors to the Maldives makes this an expensive flight. There are no chartered flights currently operating between Australia and Male'.

**Flight Centre** (☎ 131-600; www.flightcentre.com.au)

**STA Travel** (☎ 1300-733035; www.statravel.com.au)

## France

Charter flights operate between Charles de Gaulle and Male' on Star Airlines and from Paris Orly on Corsair International during high season. The rest of the year Emirates, Qatar and Sri Lanka offer the best connections and prices.

**OTU Voyages** (☎ 0 820 817 817; www.otu.fr)

**Nouvelles Frontières** (☎ 0 825 000 825; www.nouvelles-frontieres.fr)

**Voyageurs du Monde** (☎ 01 42 86 16 40; www.vdm.com)

## Germany

Germany has a huge number of charter airlines bringing huge numbers of visitors to resorts year-round. Direct flights from Düsseldorf, Frankfurt and Munich as well as from other cities are available on a number of chartered airlines.

## Italy

There is an excellent charter choice available from Italy to Male' – most are nonstop flights, although some pick up in two or more Italian cities en route. For scheduled

flights, Emirates followed by Sri Lanka and Qatar have the best connections from Rome and Milan. **CTS Viaggi** (☎ 840-501150; www.cts.it) is a recommended travel agency.

## Other Europe

There's a weekly flight on Austrian Airlines from Vienna, a twice-weekly flight from Moscow on Transaero, flights from Amsterdam on Martinair and from Switzerland on Edelweiss.

## Japan

Japanese travellers usually fly via Sri Lanka or Singapore, though some travel on Thai Airways via Bangkok and Colombo, for a lower price. Chartered flights are not in operation.

## UK & Ireland

British travellers have a choice of several charter flights from London and Manchester that go direct to Male' and scheduled flights from London via Doha (Qatar Airways), Dubai (Emirates) and Colombo (Sri Lanka).

**Bridge the World** (☎ 0870-4447447; www.bridge.theworld.com)

**Ebookers** (☎ 0800-0823000; www.ebookers.com)

**Opodo** (☎ 0871-2770091; www.opodo.co.uk)

**STA Travel** (☎ 0870-1600599; www.statravel.co.uk)

**Trailfinders** (☎ 020-79383939; www.trailfinders.co.uk)

## USA & Canada

The sheer distance involved in travelling between North America and the Maldives makes the US and Canadian tourism market minuscule. People travelling from North America will usually fly via London and then continue by Qatar Airways, Emirates or Sri Lanka. From the West coast travel via Singapore makes most sense.

## SEA

### Sri Lanka

Despite the obviousness of this route, it is currently impossible to travel between Sri Lanka and the Maldives by boat. There are no scheduled ferries operating, nor do cargo ships generally take paying passengers. You might be lucky if you ask around in Colombo, but we don't recommend this.

## Yacht

Yachts and super yachts cruise Maldivian waters throughout the year – this is after all one of many playgrounds for the rich

and famous. However, with the Maldives being somewhat out of the way, this is not a standard port of call. The Maldives has not been a popular stop for cruising yachties, but more are coming through and official policy is becoming more welcoming. The negatives include: the maze of reefs that can make it a hazardous area; the high fees for cruising permits; the officialdom; the restrictions on where yachts can go; and the absence of lively little ports with cheap cafés and waterfront bars.

A new 100-berth marina has been built at Island Hideaway in the far north of the country (see p148), and this is the only place currently set up for servicing yachts in a professional way. Addu, in the far south, has a sheltered anchorage, a tourist resort and refuelling and resupply facilities.

The three points where a yacht can get an initial 'clear in' are Uligamu (Haa Alif) in the north, Hithadhoo/Gan (Addu Atoll) in the south, and Male'. Call in on VHF channel 16 to the National Security Service (NSS) Coastguard and follow the instructions. If you're just passing through and want to stop only briefly, a 72-hour permit is usually easy to arrange. If you want to stay longer in Maldivian waters, or stop for provisions, you'll have to do immigration, customs, port authority and quarantine checks, and get a cruising permit. This can be done at any of the three clear-in facilities.

If you want to stop at Male', ensure you arrive well before dark, go to the east side of Viligili Island, between Viligili and Male', and call the coastguard on channel 16. Officially, all boats require a pilot, but they don't usually insist for boats under 30m. Carefully follow the coastguard's instructions on where to anchor, or you may find yourself in water that's very deep, or too shallow. Then contact one of the port agents, such as **Island Sailors** (☎ 3332536; www.islandsailors.com) or **Century Star** (☎ 3325353). A full list of agents can be found at www.customs.gov.mv/agents.htm.

Port agents can arrange for port authority, immigration, customs and quarantine checks, and advise on repairs, refuelling etc. They'll charge about US\$175 for a two-week stay, including all government charges – it would be a nightmare to do it all without an agent's help. After the initial checks you'll be able to cross to the

lagoon beside Hulhumale', the reclaimed land north of the airport. This is a good anchorage. The bigger stores, like STO People's Choice and Fantasy, have quite a good range of provisions at reasonable prices. The port agents can advise on other necessities such as radio repairs, water and fuelling. Diesel fuel is about Rf5 per litre.

The cost of a cruising permit increases greatly with the length of stay – the first two weeks are free, the first month is US\$200, and the second month US\$300. Customs, port and inspection charges increase with the size of the boat. If you go cruising in the tourism zone, you'll be able to stop at many of the resorts to eat, drink, swim, dive and spend your money, but you should always call the resort first. Usually you have to be off the island by sunset.

Before you leave Maldivian waters, don't forget to 'clear out' at Uligamu, Hithadhoo or Male'.

# GETTING AROUND

## AIR

### Domestic Air Services

Air transport is essential in the Maldives, given the large geographical spread of the islands and the total lack of roads. The domestic carrier is **Island Aviation** (Map p94; ☎ 3335544; Boduthakurufaanu Magu; www.island.com.mv), which offers several daily flights to the four regional airports:

**Kaadhdhoo** (Gaaf Dhaal, one daily, \$231 return, one hour)

**Gan** (Addu, two or three flights daily, \$271 return, one hour 10 minutes)

**Hanimaadhoo** (Haa Dhaal, three flights daily, \$231 return, one hour)

**Kadhdhoo** (Laamu, two daily, \$191 return, one hour)

However, the only airport within the tourism zone is Gan, meaning that this is the only place you can fly to unless you have special permission to visit the atolls or are staying in a resort located outside of the current tourism zone.

Flights are on 37-seater Dash 8 jets and 16-seater Dornier 228 aircraft and fill up fast, so book ahead (booking from home online is possible) to ensure you can get the flight you want. Fares are in US dollars for foreigners.



## Seaplane

Most travellers in the Maldives are far more likely to use the services of the two charter seaplane companies, **Trans Maldivian** (☎ 3312444; www.tma.com.mv) and **Maldivian Air Taxi** (☎ 3315201; www.mataxi.com.mv), both of which fly tourists from the seaplane port next to Male' International Airport to resorts throughout the country. Both companies fly 18-seater DeHavilland Twin Otter seaplanes under contract to resorts throughout the Maldives.

All seaplane transfers are made during daylight hours, and offer an amazing perspective on the atolls, islands, reefs and lagoons. The cost is between US\$140 and US\$350 return, depending on the distance and the deal between the resorts, and it's generally included in the package price. If there is an option of a boat transfer, or you are an FIT, the seaplane will be charged as an extra.

Charter flights for sightseeing, photography and emergency evacuation can be arranged. Call both companies for rates and availability. Note that cargo capacity on the seaplanes is limited. All passengers and baggage are weighed before loading, and some heavy items may have to wait for a later flight or be transferred by boat.

## BOAT

### Dhoni Charters

In Male', go along the waterfront to the eastern end of Boduthakurufaanu Magu by the airport ferry jetty, and you'll find many dhonis waiting in the harbour. Most of these are available for charter to nearby islands. The price depends on where you want to go, for how long, and on your negotiating skills – somewhere between Rf1000 and Rf1500 for a day is a typical rate, but if you want to start at 6am and go nonstop for 12 hours, it could be quite a bit more. You can also charter a dhoni at most resorts, but it will cost more (maybe US\$200 or US\$250 per day) and only if they're not all being used for excursions or diving trips.

### Ferries

There are a few ferry services foreigners can take without a problem, all departing from Male' and going to nearby islands. See p102 for details. Plans for a new interisland ferry service, due to begin operation in 2004, have been shelved for the time being.

## Speedboat

Resorts more than 10km or 15km away from the airport usually offer transfer by speedboat, which costs from US\$45 to US\$105 depending on the distance. This is generally included in the package price, unless there is the option of transfer by dhoni, in which case a speedboat is priced as an extra.

The boats range from a small runabout with outboard motor to a massive, multi-deck launch with an aircraft-type cabin.

Most big travel agencies can organise the charter of launches from Male', which, if you can afford it, is absolutely the best way to get around. **Inner Maldives** (Map p94; ☎ 3315499; www.innermaldives.com.mv) has very good value launches for charter at around \$350 per day, excluding the (substantial) fuel prices. For the price you'll get the services of the captain and a couple of crew members for a 10-hour day. If chartering a boat for the day, standard practice is for the client to pay for the tank to be refuelled on arrival back at Male'.

## Vedi

A *vedi* is a large dhoni with a big, square-shaped wooden superstructure, and is used for trading between Male' and the outer atolls. Sail-powered *vedis* once made trading trips to Sri Lanka, India, Burma and Sumatra, but these days the *vedis* are diesel powered and used only for interatoll transport.

No *vedi* will take you as a passenger to an atoll unless you have a permit to go there. To get a permit, you must be sponsored by someone from that atoll, and it's best to have that person arrange transport. *Vedis* use Inner Harbour in Male', west of the fishing harbour.

Travel on a *vedi* is slow and offers basic food and no creature comforts. Your bunk is a mat on a shelf, the toilet is the sea and fellow passengers may include chickens. A trip down to Addu Atoll, the most southerly and distant atoll, will take at least two days and cost around Rf300.

## CAR & MOTORCYCLE

The only places where visitors will need to travel by road are Male' and the southernmost atoll, Addu. Taxis are available in both places and driving is on the left.

# Health

## CONTENTS

<b>Before You Go</b>	<b>187</b>
Insurance	187
Recommended Vaccinations	187
<b>In The Maldives</b>	<b>187</b>
Availability & Cost of Health Care	187
Infectious Diseases	187
Traveller's Diarrhoea	187
Environmental Hazards	188

The Maldives a power station and is not a dangerous destination, with few poisonous animals, no snakes and – by Asian standards – good health care and hygiene awareness. Staying healthy here is mainly about being sensible and careful.

## BEFORE YOU GO

### INSURANCE

Make sure that you have adequate health insurance and that it covers you for expensive evacuations by seaplane or speedboat, and for any diving risks. See p70 for details on diving insurance.

### RECOMMENDED VACCINATIONS

The only vaccination officially required by the Maldives is one for yellow fever, if you're coming from an area where yellow fever is endemic. Malaria prophylaxis is not necessary.

## IN THE MALDIVES

### AVAILABILITY & COST OF HEALTH CARE

Self-diagnosis and treatment can be risky, so seek qualified help if you need it. Nearly all resorts have a resident doctor, but otherwise it may be necessary to go into Male', to the nearest atoll capital, or have a doctor come to you.

The Maldivian health service relies heavily on doctors, nurses and dentists from overseas, and facilities outside the capital

are limited. The country's main hospital is the **Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital** (Map pp90-1; ☎ 3316647; Boduthakurufaanu Magu) in Male'. Male' also has the **ADK Private Hospital** (Map p94; ☎ 3313553; Sosun Magu), which offers high-quality care at high prices. The capital island of each atoll has a government hospital or at least a health centre – these are being improved, but for any serious problem you'll have to go to Male'. Patients requiring specialist operations may have to be evacuated to Colombo or Singapore, or taken home.

Emergency evacuations from resorts are coordinated by the Coast Guard and the two seaplane companies. Seaplanes can only do evacuations during daylight hours from a limited number of landing/takeoff sites.

### INFECTIOUS DISEASES

#### Dengue Fever

Mosquitoes aren't troublesome in Maldivian resorts because there are few areas of open fresh water where they can breed. If mosquitoes do annoy you, use repellent or burn mosquito coils, available from resort shops.

Dengue fever, a viral disease transmitted by mosquitoes, occurs in Maldivian villages but is not a significant risk on resort islands or in the capital.

### TRAVELLER'S DIARRHOEA

A change of water, food or climate can all cause a mild bout of diarrhoea, but a few rushed toilet trips with no other symptoms is

#### DIVERS' MEDICAL CHECK

If you plan to do a diving course in the Maldives, you should get a diving medical checkup before you leave. There's a special form for this – a local diving club or dive shop will have the form and a list of doctors who can do a diving medical check. In the Maldives, you can have it done at the ADK Hospital (p90) and the Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital (p91) in Male'.

not indicative of a serious problem. Dehydration is the main danger with any diarrhoea. Fluid replacement remains the mainstay in managing this condition.

## ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS

Most of the potential danger (you have to be extremely unlucky or foolhardy to actually get hurt) lies under the sea.

### Anemones

These colourful creatures are also poisonous and putting your hand into one can give you a painful sting. If stung, consult a doctor as quickly as possible; the usual procedure is to soak the sting in vinegar.

### Coral Cuts & Stings

Coral is sharp stuff and brushing up against it is likely to cause a cut or abrasion. Most corals contain poisons and you're likely to get some in any wound, along with tiny grains of broken coral. The result is that a small cut can take a long time to heal. Wash any coral cuts very thoroughly with fresh water and then treat them liberally with antiseptic. Brushing against fire coral or the feathery hydroid can give you a painful sting and a persistent itchy rash.

### Heat Exhaustion

Dehydration and salt deficiency can cause heat exhaustion. Take the time to acclimatise to high temperatures, drink sufficient liquids and do not do anything too physically demanding.

Salt deficiency is characterised by fatigue, lethargy, headaches, giddiness and muscle cramps; salt tablets may help, but adding extra salt to your food is better.

### Heatstroke

This serious condition can occur if the body's heat-regulating mechanism breaks down and the body temperature rises to dangerous levels. Long, continuous periods of exposure to high temperatures and insufficient fluids can leave you vulnerable to heatstroke.

The symptoms are feeling unwell, not sweating very much (or at all) and a high body temperature (39°C to 41°C or 102°F to 106°F). Where sweating has ceased, the skin

becomes flushed and red. Severe, throbbing headaches and lack of coordination will also occur, and the sufferer may be confused or aggressive. Hospitalisation is essential, but in the interim get the victim out of the sun, remove their clothing, cover them with a wet sheet or towel and then fan continuously. Give fluids if they are conscious.

### Sea Urchins

Don't step on sea urchins as the spines are long and sharp, break off easily and once embedded in your flesh are very difficult to remove.

### Sharks

There is a negligible danger from sharks if they are not provoked. Many types of shark inhabit the Maldives, but they all have plentiful supplies of their natural food, which they find far tastier and more conveniently bite-sized than humans.

### Stonefish

These fish lie on reefs and the sea bed, and are well camouflaged. When stepped on, their sharp dorsal spines pop up and inject a venom that causes intense pain and sometimes death. Stonefish are usually found in shallow, muddy water, but also on rock and coral sea beds. They are another good reason not to walk on coral reefs.

Bathing the wound in very hot water reduces the pain and effects of the venom. An antivenene is available and medical attention should be sought as the after-effects can be very long lasting.

### Stingrays

These rays lie on sandy sea beds, and if you step on one, its barbed tail can whip up into your leg and cause a nasty, poisoned wound. Sand can drift over stingrays so they can become all but invisible while basking on the bottom. Fortunately, stingrays will usually glide away as you approach. If you're wading in the sandy shallows, try to shuffle along and make some noise. If stung, bathing the affected area in hot water is the best treatment; medical attention should be sought to ensure the wound is properly cleaned.

# Language

## CONTENTS

Greetings & Basics	189
People	190
Places	190
Time & Days	190
Numbers	190

The language of the Maldives is Divehi, also commonly written as 'Dhivehi'. It is related to an ancient form of Sinhala, a Sri Lankan language, but also contains some Arabic, Hindi and English words. On top of all this, there are several different dialects throughout the country.

English is widely spoken in Male', in the resorts, and by educated people throughout the country. English is also spoken on Addu, the southernmost atoll, where the British employed many of the islanders on the air base for 20 years. On other islands, especially outside the tourism zone, you'd be very lucky to find an adult who speaks anything other than Divehi.

Divehi has its own script, Thaana, which was introduced by the great Maldivian hero Thakurufaanu after he tossed out the Portuguese in the 16th century. Thaana looks like shorthand, has 24 letters in its alphabet and is read from right to left (their front page is our back page). See the box on this page for some examples of this unique writing system.

The Romanised transliteration of the language is a potpourri of phonetic approximations, and words can be spelt in a variety of ways. This is most obvious in Maldivian place names. For example: Majeedi Magu is also spelt Majidi, Majeedhee and Majeedee; Hithadhoo also becomes Hithadhu and Hithadhu; and Fuamulak can be Fua Mulaku, Foahmmulah or, thanks to one 19th-century mariner, Phoowa Moloku.

To add to the confusion, several islands have the same name (there are six called Viligili), and there are names for the 20 administrative atolls that do not coincide

### THAANA – THE SCRIPT OF DIVEHI

Thaana is the name of the modern script used to write Dhivehi. It looks like a cross between shorthand and Arabic, which is no coincidence, as it came to the Maldives during the Islamic revival of the late sixteenth century, and shares Arabic's right-to-left appearance for words (and left-to-right for numbers). The list below shows the letters of the Thaana alphabet with their nearest English equivalent, and a few words to show the way the letters combine.

ހ (h) ސ (sh) ނ (n) ރ (r) ބ (b) ޅ (lh) ކ (k)  
 އ (a) ވ (v) މ (m) ފ (f) ދ (t) ތ (dh) ލ (th)  
 ގ (l) ޏ (g) ސ (gn) ޑ (s) ޒ (d) ޓ (z) ޔ (t)  
 ޕ (y) ޖ (p) ޗ (j) ޘ (ch)

palm tree	ruh	ރުހ
cat	bulhaa	ބުލްޙާ
egg	bis	ބިސް

with the names used for the Maldives' 25 natural atolls.

There is no officially correct, or even consistent, spelling of Divehi words in official English language publications.

Maldivians are pleased to help you learn a few phrases of Divehi, and, even if you only learn a few words, the locals you meet will be very appreciative of your interest.

The best phrasebook available is *Practical Divehi* by M Zuhair (Novelty Press, Male', 1991). It's available from the Novelty Bookshop in Male' and in a number of the resort shops.

### GREETINGS & BASICS

<b>Hello.</b>	<i>a-salam alekum</i>
<b>Farewell.</b>	<i>vale kumu salam</i>
<b>Peace.</b>	<i>salam</i>
<b>Hi.</b>	<i>kihine</i>
<b>See you later.</b>	<i>fahung badaluvang</i>
<b>How are you?</b>	<i>haalu kihine?</i>
<b>Very well.</b> (reply)	<i>vara gada</i>
<b>Fine/Good/Great.</b>	<i>barabah</i>
<b>OK.</b>	<i>enge</i>
<b>Thank you.</b>	<i>shukuria</i>
<b>Yes.</b>	<i>aa</i>
<b>No.</b>	<i>noo</i>



<b>How much is this?</b>	<i>mi kihavaraka?</i>
<b>What is that?</b>	<i>mi korche?</i>
<b>What did you say?</b>	<i>kike tha buni?</i>
<b>I'm leaving.</b>	<i>aharen dani</i>
<b>Where are you going?</b>	<i>kong taka dani?</i>
<b>How much is the fare?</b>	<i>fi kihavare?</i>
<b>I/me</b>	<i>aharen/ma</i>
<b>you</b>	<i>kale</i>
<b>she/he</b>	<i>mina/ena</i>
<b>name</b>	<i>nang, nama</i>
<b>expensive</b>	<i>agu bodu</i>
<b>very expensive</b>	<i>vara agu bodu</i>
<b>cheap</b>	<i>agu heyo</i>
<b>enough</b>	<i>heo</i>
<b>now</b>	<i>mihaaru</i>
<b>little</b> (for people, places)	<i>kuda</i>
<b>mosquito</b>	<i>madiri</i>
<b>mosquito net</b>	<i>madiri ge</i>
<b>bathroom</b>	<i>gifili</i>
<b>toilet</b>	<i>fahana</i>
<b>inside</b>	<i>etere</i>
<b>outside</b>	<i>berufarai</i>
<b>water</b> (rain, well)	<i>vaare feng or valu feng</i>
<b>swim</b>	<i>fatani</i>
<b>eat</b>	<i>kani</i>
<b>walk</b>	<i>hingani</i>
<b>sleep</b>	<i>nidani</i>
<b>sail</b>	<i>duvani</i>
<b>go</b>	<i>dani</i>
<b>stay</b>	<i>hunani</i>
<b>dance</b>	<i>nashani</i>
<b>wash</b>	<i>donani</i>

**PEOPLE**

<b>friend</b>	<i>ratehi</i>
<b>mother</b>	<i>mama</i>
<b>father</b>	<i>bapa</i>
<b>atoll chief</b>	<i>atolu verin</i>
<b>island chief</b>	<i>kateeb</i>
<b>VIP, upper-class person</b>	<i>befalu</i>
<b>white person</b> (tourist or expat)	<i>don miha</i>
<b>religious leader</b>	<i>gazi</i>
<b>prayer caller</b>	<i>mudeem</i>
<b>fisherman</b>	<i>mas veri</i>
<b>toddy man</b>	<i>ra veri</i>
<b>evil spirit</b>	<i>jinni</i>

**PLACES**

<b>atoll</b>	<i>atolu</i>
<b>island</b>	<i>fushi/rah</i>

<b>sandbank</b>	<i>finolhu</i>
<b>reef/lagoon</b>	<i>faru</i>
<b>street</b>	<i>magu</i>
<b>lane or small street</b>	<i>golhi/higun</i>
<b>mosque</b>	<i>miski</i>
<b>house</b>	<i>ge</i>

**TIME & DAYS**

<b>today</b>	<i>miadu</i>
<b>tomorrow</b>	<i>madamma</i>
<b>yesterday</b>	<i>iye</i>
<b>tonight</b>	<i>mire</i>
<b>day</b>	<i>duvas</i>
<b>night</b>	<i>reggadu</i>
<b>Monday</b>	<i>horma</i>
<b>Tuesday</b>	<i>angaara</i>
<b>Wednesday</b>	<i>buda</i>
<b>Thursday</b>	<i>brassfati</i>
<b>Friday</b>	<i>hukuru</i>
<b>Saturday</b>	<i>honihira</i>
<b>Sunday</b>	<i>aadita</i>

**NUMBERS**

<b>1</b>	<i>eke</i>
<b>2</b>	<i>de</i>
<b>3</b>	<i>tine</i>
<b>4</b>	<i>hatare</i>
<b>5</b>	<i>fahe</i>
<b>6</b>	<i>haie</i>
<b>7</b>	<i>hate</i>
<b>8</b>	<i>ashe</i>
<b>9</b>	<i>nue</i>
<b>10</b>	<i>diha</i>
<b>11</b>	<i>egaara</i>
<b>12</b>	<i>baara</i>
<b>13</b>	<i>tera</i>
<b>14</b>	<i>saada</i>
<b>15</b>	<i>fanara</i>
<b>16</b>	<i>sorla</i>
<b>17</b>	<i>satara</i>
<b>18</b>	<i>ashara</i>
<b>19</b>	<i>onavihi</i>
<b>20</b>	<i>vih</i>
<b>30</b>	<i>tiris</i>
<b>40</b>	<i>saalis</i>
<b>50</b>	<i>fansaas</i>
<b>60</b>	<i>fasdolaas</i>
<b>70</b>	<i>hai-diha</i>
<b>80</b>	<i>a-diha</i>
<b>90</b>	<i>nua-diha</i>
<b>100</b>	<i>sateka</i>

# Glossary

**animator** – scary extroverted person employed in some resorts to promote group activities and ‘good times’. Be afraid.

**atoll** – ring of coral reefs or coral islands, or both, surrounding a lagoon; the English word ‘atoll’ is derived from the Divehi atolu

**atolu verin** – atoll chief

**bai bala** – traditional game where one team tries to tag another inside a circle

**bashi** – traditional girls’ team game played with a tennis ball, racket and net

**BCD** – buoyancy control device; a vest that holds air tanks on the back and can be inflated or deflated to control a diver’s buoyancy and act as a life preserver; also called a buoyancy control vest (BCV)

**befalu** – upper class of privileged families

**bodu** – big or great

**bodu beru** – literally ‘big drum’; made from a hollow coconut log and covered with stingray skin; *bodu beru* is also Maldivian drum music, often used to accompany dancers

**bodu raalhu** – literally ‘big wave’; when the sea sweeps over the islands, causing damage and sometimes loss of life

**bonthi** – stick used for martial arts

**cadjan** – mat made of coconut palm leaves

**carrom** – popular board game, like a miniature snooker; players use their fingers to flick flat round counters from the edges of a square wooden board, trying to knock other players’ counters into the four corner holes

**chew** – wad of areca nut wrapped in an areca leaf, often with lime, cloves and other spices; commonly chewed after a meal

**CMAS** – Confédération Mondiale des Activités Subaquatiques; French organisation that sets diving standards, training requirements and accredits instructors

**Dhiraagu** – the Maldives telecommunications provider, it is jointly owned by the government and the British company Cable & Wireless

**dhiguhedhun** – traditional women’s dress, full length with long sleeves and a wide collar, usually in unpatterned fabric but sometimes brightly coloured

**dhoni** – Maldivian boat, probably derived from an Arabian dhow. Formerly sail powered, many dhonis are now equipped with a diesel engine

**Divehi** – language and people of the Maldives, also spelt ‘Dhivehi’

**Divehi Raajje** – ‘Island Kingdom’; what Maldivians call the Maldives

**divemaster** – male or female diver qualified to supervise and lead dives, but not necessarily a qualified instructor

**fahana** – toilet

**fandhita** – magic, wizardry

**faru** – also called *faru*; ring-shaped reef within an atoll, often with an island in the middle

**feylis** – traditional sarong, usually dark with light-coloured horizontal bands near the hem

**finolhu** – sparsely vegetated sand bank

**FIT** – fully independent traveller

**fushi** – island

**gazi** – religious head of atoll

**gifili** – courtyard with a well; used as an open-air bathroom; a modern version is a popular feature of many resort rooms

**giri** – coral formation that rises steeply from the atoll floor and almost reaches the surface; see also *thila*

**goalhi** – short, narrow lane

**hajj** – Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca

**haveeru** – evening

**hawitta** – ancient mound found in the southern atolls; archaeologists believe these mounds were the foundations of Buddhist temples

**higun** – wide lane

**house reef** – coral reef adjacent to a resort island, used by guests for snorkelling and diving; guests from other resorts can’t dive on a house reef without permission

**hulhangu** – the southwest monsoon period, from May to November, which are the wetter months with more storms and strong winds

**inner-reef slope** – where a reef slopes down inside an atoll; see also *outer-reef slope*

**iruvai** – northeast monsoon period, from December to March, which are the drier months

**jinni** – witch or wizard, sometimes coming from the sea

**joli** – also called *jarli*; net seat suspended from a rectangular frame; typically there are four or five seats together outside a house

**kandiki** – sarong worn by women under the libaas

**kandu** – sea channel; connecting the waters of an atoll to the open sea; feeding grounds for pelagics, such as sharks, stingrays, manta rays and turtles; good dive sites, but subject to strong currents

**kateeb** – chief of an island  
**kunaa** – traditional woven mat

**laajehun** – lacquer work traditionally used as containers, bowls and trays to present gifts to the sultan, now popular as small souvenirs

**libaas** – traditional dress with wide collar and cuffs, and embroidered with gold thread

**madrassa** – government primary school

**magu** – wide street

**mas** – fish

**miskiyy** – mosque

**MTPB** – Maldives Tourism Promotion Board; the government tourism promotion organisation

**mudhim** – muezzin; the person who calls Muslims to prayer

**mundu** – man's sarong, usually made with a chequered cotton fabric with a darker panel at the back of the garment

**munnaaru** – minaret, a mosque's tower

**nakaiy** – period of about two weeks associated with a specific weather pattern; the year is divided into 27 *nakaiy*

**namahd** – call to prayer for Muslims

**NSS** – National Security Service; the Maldivian army, navy, coastguard and police force

**outer-reef slope** – outer edge of an atoll facing open sea, where reefs slope down towards the ocean floor; see also inner-reef slope

**PADI** – Professional Association of Diving Instructors; commercial organisation that sets diving standards and training requirements and accredits instructors

**pelagic** – open-sea species such as tuna, barracuda and whales

**Quran** – also spelt Koran; Islam's holy book

**raa veri** – toddy seller

**Ramazan** – Maldivian spelling of Ramadan, the Muslim month of fasting

**Redin** – legendary race of people believed by modern Maldivians to have been the first settlers in the archipelago and the builders of the pre-Islamic *hawittas*

**reef** – ridge or plateau close to the sea surface; Maldivian atolls and islands are surrounded by coral reefs

**reef flat** – shallow area of reef top that stretches out from a lagoon to where the reef slopes down into the deeper surrounding water

**rhan** – bride price

**SAARC** – South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation; a regional trade and development organisation which comprises Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka

**SSI** – Scuba Schools International; diver accreditation organisation

**STO** – State Trading Organisation

**Thaana** – Divehi script; the written language unique to the Maldives

**thila** – coral formation that rises steeply from the atoll floor to within 5m to 15m of the surface; see also *giri*

**thin mugoali** – 'three circles', a 400-year-old game similar to baseball

**thileyrukan** – traditional jewellery-making

**toddy tapper** – person who extracts the sap of a palm tree to make toddy

**tundu kunaa** – finely woven reed mats, particularly those from Gaaf Dhaal

**undholi** – wooden seat, typically suspended under a shady tree so the swinging motion provides a cooling breeze

**vedi** – large dhoni used for trading between Male' and the outer atolls

**VSO** – Voluntary Service Overseas; British overseas aid organisation

**wadhemun** – tug-of-war

**Wataniya** – Kuwaiti mobile phone provider operating one of the Maldives' two networks

© Lonely Planet Publications. To make it easier for you to use, access to this chapter is not digitally restricted. In return, we think it's fair to ask you to use it for personal, non-commercial purposes only. In other words, please don't upload this chapter to a peer-to-peer site, mass email it to everyone you know, or resell it. See the terms and conditions on our site for a longer way of saying the above - 'Do the right thing with our content.'