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Welcome back!

As our May issue goes to print, once again this region requires a huge resilience and optimism to combat the fear of both, COVID-19 itself and its economic impact on our industry. Frustration and a sense of powerlessness against a common enemy play havoc with one's mental health, let alone the bank account!

As health officials and border workers scramble to find the sources and strive to reduce the community harm by reviewing hotel procedures, it can be difficult to remain optimistic when many of us have been jolted back to the reality of the virus.

On a brighter note, according to a group of scientists working on a global map of underwater soundscapes; restrictions that took place due to the pandemic, especially last year (and this year still in certain parts of the world), have produced the quietest year for the world's oceans in recent memory. The aim of this International Quiet Ocean Experiment – a 10-year plan launched in 2015 to create a time series of measurements of ambient sound in many ocean locations – is to create evidence to persuade ship operators, oil and gas facilities and jetski users to dampen their decibels for the sake of the marine ecosystems. Sound is light in the oceans. It illuminates the ocean for many animals. They use it to communicate, to hunt, and can be harmed by noise at excess. Scientists have retrospectively declared last year “the year of the quiet ocean”.

Speaking of the ocean, in this issue's cover, we are excited to have Matt Wenger, Regional Manager at PADI, in a candid conversation with us (p. 12-13), where he spoke about his journey to becoming a professional diver, as well as the importance of taking care of our marine environment.

Also, in this month's Bon Appétit column (p.22), Trent Richardson, Executive Pastry Chef of LUX* North Malé Atoll, defines ‘innovation in the kitchen’ with his exciting recipe of Coconut Spheres, to satisfy your sweet tooth.

Keeping up with the latest news, views and events in the hospitality and tourism sectors is more important than ever now, so ensure you follow us online at www.islandchief.com and sign up to our newsletter – a great way to keep informed between our print and digital editions!

Until next month,
The islandchief Team

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5 UNITED NATIONS AGENCIES

SriLankan Airlines and Qatar Airways Expand Codeshare Agreement

SriLankan Airlines is strengthening its presence in the North American and European markets through the expansion of its existing codeshare agreement with Qatar Airways, across ten cities in six countries covering Canada, Hungary, Azerbaijan, Scotland, Ukraine, and Turkey.

Vipula Gunatilleka, Chief Executive Officer of SriLankan Airlines said: "The expansion of our partnership with Qatar Airways is an important element in SriLankan's ongoing initiatives to provide seamless connectivity for our valued passengers across a wide range of destinations, apart from increasing the number of cities that we fly to."

Accordingly, SriLankan Airlines will codeshare on Qatar Airways operated flights between Doha and Turkey's Istanbul Atatürk Airport, Ankara Esenboğa Airport in the city of Ankara, Izmir Adnan Menderes Airport in Izmir, Antalya International Airport in Antalya and Sabiha Gokcen International Airport in Sabiha; Budapest Ferenc Liszt International Airport in Budapest, Hungary; Baku Heydar Aliyev International Airport in Azerbaijan; Edinburgh Airport in Scotland; and Kyiv Boryspil International Airport in Ukraine. The airline will be reaching the North American territory through Montréal-Pierre



Elliott Trudeau International Airport situated in Montreal, the largest city in Canada's Québec province. Both airlines offer easy connectivity between Qatar Airways' hub in Doha's Hamad International Airport and Colombo's Bandaranaike International Airport several times a day.

This is the third phase of the recent expansion of the codeshare agreement between the two airlines, which are both members of the oneworld global airline alliance that connects passengers to over a thousand cities in more than 170 countries and

territories through 14 member airlines. The total number of destinations shared between the two airlines is 48.

Expanding the SriLankan Airlines route network across 111 cities in 55 countries with the addition of these codeshare destinations, SriLankan Airlines passengers will now have the option of seamless long-distance travel via Doha through one travel booking with enhanced travel options to Europe and North America. SriLankan Airlines has a number of codeshare agreements with other airlines.



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ACROSS THE SKIES

Iberia to Commence Weekly Operations to Maldives

Spain's national carrier, Iberia, has announced the launch of flights to the Maldives in time for summer 2021. From July to August, the airline will be commencing two direct flights on a weekly basis from Madrid to Malé.



Iberia's Executive Chairman Javier Sánchez-Prieto said, "The announcement of the new Maldives route is expected to raise company morale and is viewed both as good news for the travel business and as an example of how Iberia is adapting to the new circumstances, and opening new markets."

Further mentioning industry recovery, he said, "Vaccination campaigns are leading to the lifting of

restrictions on travel, and it is vital to come up with formulas that are valid for Europe, the Americas, and eventually for every country in the world."

The new route to Maldives is a change from traditional Iberia policy, as a point-to-point long-haul flight exclusively for holidaymakers. Iberia currently operates to 112 destinations and the new list of summer destinations to be added serves as an example of fast

recovery.

Founded in 1927, Iberia is the largest Spanish airline and the leader between Latin American and Europe. It aims to be the best option for leisure and business travellers. From its base in Madrid Barajas airport, Iberia offers multiple connections thanks to its extensive network. Additionally, the airline is involved in aircraft maintenance, airport handling services and cargo.

Qatar Airways Holidays Launches New Quarantine-Free Holiday Packages to Maldives, Istanbul and Tbilisi

Citizens and residents of Qatar who have completed the COVID-19 vaccination will have an exclusive opportunity for a much-awaited vacation, followed by a quarantine-free return to Qatar.



With more options available, fully vaccinated travellers can choose between a tranquil and luxurious escape in the Maldives, a culture-filled city at the crossroads of Europe and Asia in Istanbul, or a Georgian gastronomic experience around Tbilisi's cobbled streets.

Qatar Airways Holidays' three-night all-inclusive package to the Maldives provide the option to choose between two luxury hotels – Diamonds Thudufushi

and Sandies Bathala – with prices starting from QAR 5,766, which includes return seaplane transfers to the resorts. Holiday packages to Istanbul start at QAR 2,420 and in Tbilisi at QAR 3,340, for a four-night stay and including flights.

Qatar Airways Holidays' customers can now book their holiday packages and other travel services through the newly launched Arabic website. This accessible platform was developed in response to

increasing demand among Arabic speaking travellers. Visitors to qatarairwaysholidays.com can also book the sought-after 'Summer in Greece' holiday package and benefit from up to 40 per cent off the normal price for vacations in Athens and Mykonos. The Holiday offer starts at QAR 4,380 per person, for three nights and includes flights, daily breakfast, transfers and local assistance for sightseeing and excursions. The offer is for travel between May 14 and September 30, 2021.

Recovering Markets

According to the Maldives Ministry of Tourism’s statistical report “Maldives Tourism Updates 29th April 2021”, from January 1, 2021 to April 28, 2021, a total of 383,630 tourists arrived in the Maldives.

The top source market for tourist arrivals was India with 86,127 arrivals, followed by Russia with 83,443 tourist arrivals. Ukraine stood third with 20,626 tourist arrivals. Other top source markets include Germany, Kazakhstan, USA, United Kingdom, Romania, Czech Republic and France.

According to the report, markets are also recovering with impressive results. As of April 27, 2021, the Central/Eastern European region, as well as the South Asian and African regions surpassed pre-COVID levels, posting above average growth rates of +171.0%, +136.4% and +52.3% respectively.

The Ministry’s report further highlights that individual markets within the Central/Eastern European region are also performing with outstanding results, as new markets emerge from the region and are making it to the top 10 markets list.

Markets

From 1st January to 27th April 2021

	Arrivals		Growth (%)
	2020	2021	
Kazakhstan	2,771	15,434	457.0
Ukraine	4,555	20,626	352.8
Lithuania	686	2,622	282.2
Pakistan	1,214	4,343	257.7
United Arab Emirates	1,132	3,431	203.1
Russia	28,949	83,443	188.2
Romania	4,017	10,710	166.6
India	34,863	86,127	147.0
Bulgaria	2,298	5,317	131.4
Czech Republic	4,353	9,092	108.9
Brazil	2,572	4,383	70.4
Slovakia	2,888	4,115	42.5
Poland	5,537	7,255	31.0
Spain	3,903	4,613	18.2
Hungary	4,736	5,558	17.4
U.S.A	11,414	11,512	0.9

Central/Eastern Europe	63,654	172,533	171.0
South Asia	39,353	93,037	136.4
Africa	3,312	5,044	52.3

Source: Maldives Tourism Updates 29th April 2021 / Ministry of Tourism



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IN A NUTSHELL

Share Exciting Moments with Family and Friends this Eid at LUX* North Malé Atoll Resort and Villas, Maldives

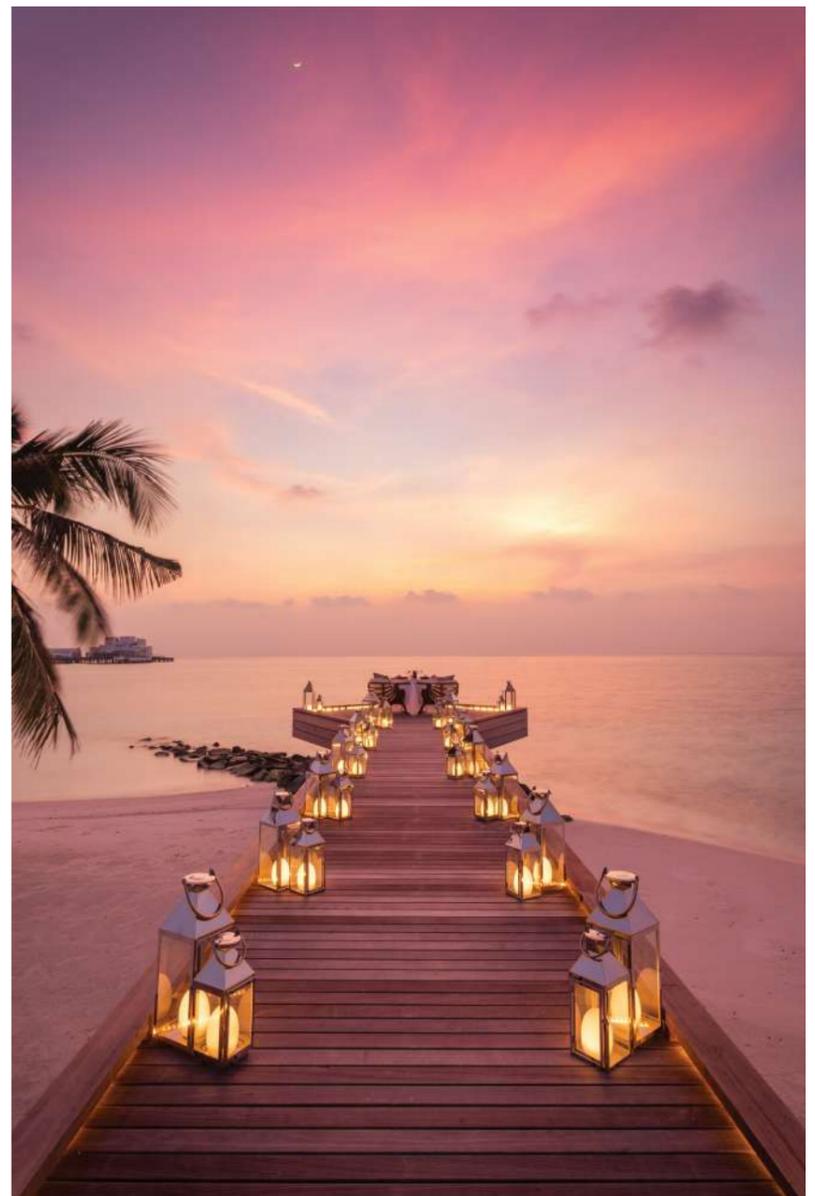
Amidst the lush setting of this tropical hideaway providing the perfect idyllic setting for families or couples, enjoy 30 percent off a four-night villa stay, for bookings made before April 30, 2021.

The offer includes a complimentary upgrade to half board meal plan, a private Cinema Paradiso experience in the comfort and privacy of guests' own rooftop, including fresh popcorn and snacks.

The unique configuration of the LUX* Retreats, which can accommodate up to eight guests, is perfect for multigenerational families seeking togetherness in an exotic location or a group of friends looking to spend Eid together. The extremely private villas with their 24-hour butler service, in-villa spa treatments, unlimited laundry service and a fitness area, sauna and hammam, present the ideal spot for celebration. What sets these retreats apart is their immense rooftop overlooking a private infinity pool and the vast blue of the Indian Ocean.

Discover the calm waters of the Maldives with an array of new watersports activities or explore the charming island paradise followed by a pampering spa treatment at LUX* Me Spa. For families travelling together, PLAY, the kids club, offers attractive daily activities to help the LUX* little guest create fun and exciting memories.

An authentic Indian ocean experience, LUX* North Male Atoll Resort and Villas is an intimate getaway where guests can truly embrace the Miami vibe while enjoying their vacation. To pre-arrange any of the Eid Offer activities, contact LUX* North Malé Atoll's Reservations team at stay@luxnorthmale.com



Dusit Thani Maldives Launches a Renewed Spa Concept

Rebranded as Devarana Wellness, the island sanctuary promises a holistic approach to wellbeing, designed for contemporary lifestyles.



A haven for guests seeking relaxation and rejuvenation, Devarana Spa at Dusit Thani Maldives pivots to a new focus in 2021. In response to the increasingly health-conscious aspirations of its guests and with a deep commitment to their ongoing wellbeing, Devarana Wellness goes beyond

a spa. It will offer an ancient solution to a modern problem via a deceleration methodology. With the fast pace of modern life causing unease, unrest, stress and anxiety, the chance to "pause" and slow-down are more necessary than ever. Inspired by the Thai-Sanskrit word for "a garden in heaven",

Devarana Wellness is Dusit's wellness solution, which will draw on its ancient influences, employing traditional Thai healing wisdom and the spirit of Buddhist wellness principles, the approach and practice aims to restore health and strengthen balance.

Using knowledge passed down through generations alongside innovative concepts and wellbeing micro-moments, Devarana Wellness seeks to restore the internal balance of body and mind across the wellness modalities of Thai herbal medicine, traditional healing therapies, meditation, movement and nutrition. Guests are invited to take time to slow down, explore new experiences and enjoy the chance to prioritise their wellbeing.

"Wellness is not about a singular interaction or service," said Paul Hawco, Corporate Director of Wellness. "It is seamlessly integrated across our guest's entire experience."

At Dusit Thani Maldives, guests begin their wellness journey the moment they arrive on the island. Devarana Wellness provides the inspiration, therapies and experiences to progress to a more profound sense of wellbeing, to restore balance and discover a new outlook in paradise.

IN A NUTSHELL

Waldorf Astoria Maldives Unveils Stella Maris Villa, the Ultimate Maldivian Hideaway

Waldorf Astoria Maldives Ithaafushi has unveiled the Stella Maris Villas, a brand-new addition to its collection of villas and a private island.



These villas are perfectly positioned for the discerning few to admire the majestic celestial charm of the destination. The property opened in late summer, 2019, and created a new standard of luxury in the Maldives.

Inspired by Waldorf Astoria New York's iconic lobby, the Stella Maris' interiors pay homage to the chic art deco era of days past, paired with a truly unique and modern Maldivian take, setting the villas apart across the Southern Atoll. This spacious villa is as open as the ocean with uninterrupted vistas.

Guests staying here can even enjoy a chef's Champagne barbecue under the stars where a private chef delights the senses with dishes which include locally caught reef fish, Peruvian scallop ceviche, and more sumptuous seafood along with homemade pavlova with lavender Chantilly cream. Guests can also indulge in private in-villa daily breakfasts and a dedicated daily cabana at the main resort.

Exclusive to Stella Maris's guests is a private couple's massage; the hour-long treatment will take its origin from warm heart-shaped Himalayan salt stones, a transformative stone meant to improve circulation, exfoliate the body and relieve stress and insomnia. The massage will finish off with an exclusive gold-infused oil leaving guests as golden as the stars in the sky. Post massage indulgences include a bottle of champagne and an array of heart and star-shaped golden chocolates. This rare heart-shaped stone will be gifted to each couple to take home to continue the memory of this extraordinary escape at home.

The villa features a large bedroom with a sitting area,

generous indoor living and dining area fitted with state-of-the-art audio-visual entertainment and a magnificent bathroom, all with floor-to-ceiling windows providing open vistas across the Indian Ocean. The upper deck offers a jacuzzi facing the stunning Maldivian sunsets and a lounge/BBQ area where the open ocean surrounds you. The lower wooden deck boasts its own full-length infinity pool, overwater hammocks and direct ocean access.

When guests wish to access the main resort, the villa's private boat is ready to whisk guests to a dedicated cabana just for Stella Maris residents. Complete with personalised amenities, full facilities, and changing area, the cabana continues the feeling of romance whilst enjoying the main resort's buzz. For couples looking for unforgettable experiences, Waldorf Astoria Maldives offers guests a plethora of activities both on and off property, including parasailing, surfing, X-Jets, Jetblade, Seabobs, Jet Skis, wreck diving, night snorkelling and game fishing. The property is also a haven for connoisseurs with eleven outstanding bars and restaurants to choose from.

Etienne Dalancon, General Manager, Waldorf Astoria Maldives Ithaafushi states: "Stella Maris Villas provide a raft of unforgettable experiences and are unlike any other villa product in the destination. We know guests will be blown away by the spectacular design and our legendary True Waldorf Service that has made each stay memorable. The villas come primed with bespoke amenities which are exclusive to Stella Maris, and they will enable that guests find the intimacy and privacy that they crave."

According to the resort, Stella Maris is a lover's

getaway like no other, true Maldivian seclusion matched with truly unforgettable experiences with a twist, making this perfect couples retreat for those looking to escape together, to find peace, tranquility and romance.

Spanning three interconnected islands in the South Malé Atoll and a short 45-minute yacht journey away from Velana International Airport, Waldorf Astoria Maldives Ithaafushi is an iconic resort paradise surrounded by the natural beauty of the Maldivian landscape and the crystal-clear Indian Ocean. Aside from the excellent restaurants and bars, the resort also boasts 119 spacious villas, the Waldorf Astoria Young Discovery Park, a world-class spa, and Ithaafushi, the private island, the largest private island in the Maldives.

Waldorf Astoria Maldives Ithaafushi operates with an industry-leading standard of cleanliness and disinfection of the proprietary Hilton CleanStay program while adhering to the Maldivian health and safety guidelines. From arrival to check-in and throughout the entire stay, guests can experience an elevated standard of cleanliness and sanitization built upon Hilton's already high housekeeping and hygiene standards, where hospital-grade cleaning products and upgraded protocols are currently in place. For more information about Hilton CleanStay, visit:



IN A NUTSHELL

Seaside Finolhu Offers the Perfect Eid Escape in the Maldives

With some of the most stylish villas and sumptuous dining in the Maldives, Seaside Finolhu delivers an exquisite balance of natural wonder and luxurious living to offer the perfect Eid escape.



Located within the UNESCO-protected Baa Atoll and the first resort in the Maldives to be included in the Design Hotels' prestigious international portfolio, Seaside Finolhu strikes a balance between natural beauty and refined luxury. All of Seaside Finolhu's villas have recently undergone a comprehensive upgrade, and fitted with the must-have devices of modern luxury living to give them an even more stylish edge. Combining seclusion, privacy and

generous amount of space, the resort's private pool villas and 2-bedroom beach villas offer couples and families the perfect haven to get together and recharge during Eid al-Fitr.

Couples looking for a romantic holiday can enjoy total privacy at the resort's pool villas. Finolhu's Private Pool Villas are nestled within their own secluded tropical garden, and feature a swimming

pool and indoor and outdoor showers. Event families are spoilt for choice when it comes to accommodation at Seaside Finolhu. The two-bedroom Rockstar Villa is located at the very end of the jetty for total seclusion. Everything here is designed to be a little larger than life, with two spacious master bedrooms, an infinity pool and a lavish cocktail bar within its living area which comes with sprawling views of the ocean as far as the eye can see. The Two-Bedroom Beach Villa with Pool boasts even more space, with two master bedrooms, separate bathrooms, a 10-metre pool, a stretch of private beach and stunning sunset views. All villas feature flatscreen TVs and state-of-the-art entertainment systems.

After the holy month of fasting, food forms an integral part of the Eid al-Fitr festivities, and Seaside Finolhu offers some excellent dining options for all. The Arabian Grill takes diners on a culinary trip to North Africa and the Middle East with sensuous feasts to tempt the palate, nose, eyes and even ears; where the sight and sound of fresh meat sizzling gently mixes with the lapping of the waves and the aroma of Maghreb spices subtly fill the air. Aside from traditional North African and Middle Eastern fare, Seaside Finolhu also offers diners the choice of the very finest seafood, Asian and international cuisine at its world-class restaurants Crab Shack, Kanusan and all-day-dining restaurant Beach Kitchen.

Grand Park Kodhipparu Maldives Extends Free Pre-Departure Quarantine Offer for Guests Tested Positive

The stunning island featuring 120 luxurious overwater villas, beach villas and two-bedroom Grand Residence, has announced the extension of their free quarantine offer for guests found positive with COVID-19 before their departure.

Guests can stay worry-free without the extra charges, as the resort will cover their mandatory quarantine stay on the island with a full board meal, complimentary fruit basket, a post-quarantine PCR test and COVID insurance. The exclusive benefit is offered to all guests who book directly to the resort, from the official website with a minimum of 4 nights. This benefit is applicable to any direct booking made from April 15 onwards.

Booking direct has never been so beneficial, as guests can also enjoy the best rate guarantee exclusive member's rate for Park Rewards members, flexibility, pre-arrival requested assistance and free Wi-Fi during stay. Park Hotel Group also recently introduced their sustainability programme, "Room for Trees", where a tree will be planted for every booking made through the website.



Grand Park Kodhipparu, Maldives, is conveniently located a 20-minute speedboat ride from Velana International Airport. Guests can enjoy culinary delight from 3 different restaurants, a pampering experience at the award-winning overwater spa and

various marine and watersports activities. The resort is also a perfect place for families fully equipped with games and amusement at the Beach Club and Little Explore's Kids Club.



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IN A NUTSHELL

Crown & Champa Resorts Reminds Us to be Mindful of the Environment with its Sustainability Initiatives

Crown & Champa Resorts is dedicated towards protecting and conserving the natural, as well as fragile environment of the Maldives with its initiated sustainable efforts.

Crown & Champa Resorts noted that are committed to raising awareness and educating both, their associates and guests on the matter, while also acknowledging their own impact and responsibility towards the planet for present and future generations.

Stating that taking care of the environment is a collective responsibility, Crown & Champa Resorts has carried out various sustainability efforts across their islands while providing exceptional holiday experiences for travellers.

replaced with energy-saving LED lamps. Additionally, the resort has a desalination plant that allows the resort to produce its own potable water, about 164,980 litres daily, for both guest and staff consumption.

The family-friendly Kuredu Island Resort proudly displays colourful, electric-powered scooters and shuttle club cars available for its staff and guests, aimed towards minimizing the impacts on air pollution.

transported and secured back onto the reef in the future.

The famed dive resort of Vilamendhoo Maldives in the South Ari Atoll offers eco-conscious diving and snorkelling excursions that provide guests with a once-in-a-lifetime experience while educating them on the importance of protecting the marine ecosystem, including every creature living in it. The hotel brand is also working closely with the



Waste Management

In its efforts to decrease single-use plastics, all Crown & Champa resorts have replaced plastic water bottles with reusable glass bottles, and they also use special linen bags instead of non-biodegradable plastic. Additionally, plastic straws have successfully been removed from the resort's restaurants and bars, providing guests with eco-friendly alternatives.



Energy Management - Harnessing the sun

Opened in December 2018, the ultra-luxury Kudadoo Private Island was not only designed and built from all-natural materials, but its operations run entirely on solar power. The resort's central hub, known as The Retreat, houses an exclusive spa and wellness centre and features a photovoltaic roof covered with almost a thousand solar panels, which generate 300kW of electricity.

The five-star Hurawalhi Island Resort, the adults-only Komandoo Island Resort, the vibrant Kuredu Island Resort and the affordable Innahura Maldives Resort have also installed solar panels to harness energy from the sun, which translates to a massive reduction in carbon emissions.

The secluded island paradise of Veligandu Maldives has implemented efficient lighting in villas and public areas, with about 97% of its light bulbs

The properties are taking numerous ways to prevent plastic waste, including lesser-known and not on-trend endeavours such as:

- Buffet restaurants offer dispensers instead of individually-portioned butter in plastic containers
- Carbonated drink glass bottles are now used in minibars, allowing them to decrease plastic usage
- Toiletries provided in its villas and spas are from Healing Earth, a world-renowned industry leader for luxury amenities that are organic and biodegradable.

Marine Life Conservation

Kagi Maldives Spa Island, the Maldives' only resort for relaxed luxury and lifestyle retreats, has established a coral nursery programme where currently 15 coral fragments are growing in a well-monitored environment, which will be

Manta Trust, a UK based, independent non-profit organisation whose mission is to advance the conservation of manta rays and their habitat, and the Olive Ridley Project, whose dedication is to protect sea turtles in the Indian Ocean through research, education, and rehabilitation.

Sustainable Supplies

Meeru Island Resort & Spa, one of the Maldives' most expansive resort islands, features 'Meeru Garden'. The sustainable garden was developed to meet the needs of its day-to-day kitchen operations and provide guests and associates with fresh ingredients and organic produce. Guests can also join the 'Nature and Vegetation Exploration' tour, providing them with information on how the resort manages to grow fruit and vegetables on the island and preserve the natural surroundings.

Komandoo Island Resort, the leading adults-only resort in the Maldives, sources fish directly from the neighbouring islands' fishermen. As such, the resort is able to support the livelihood of these local fishers and contribute to the local economy.

Local Community Engagement

Going beyond just environmental sustainability, Crown & Champa resorts aim to create value for local communities by empowering them through job creation, education and community impact initiatives. Throughout the year, they participate in various social activities within nearby communities, including blood donation drives, island reef and lagoon clean-ups, fundraising, and local sports events. Occasionally, local artisans are also invited to the resorts, where they can have the opportunity to showcase their craft and promote local culture and heritage.



IN A NUTSHELL

Escape to the 'Best of Maldives' at Anantara Kihavah Villas

Anantara Kihavah Maldives Villas has presented yet even more reasons why a Maldives escape is balm for the soul with its 'Best of Maldives' stay package, valid for stays until December 23, 2021.



A promise of great adventures awaits with a trio of experiences designed to awaken wanderlust; snorkelling with majestic manta rays, stargazing at the water observatory, and fine dining underwater at SEA.

The pinnacle of all dining chronicles lies in a sublime culinary journey undersea. Perched at the edges of Anantara Kihavah's famed house reef, descend six metres into SEA, the resort's award-winning underwater restaurant and wine cellar, home to over 450 labels and vintages dating from the 17th century. An exceptional feast for the senses, savour a gourmet four-course lunch, whilst luxuriating in panoramic views of marine life at play amongst vibrant corals.

The second aquatic experience in the 'Best of Maldives' stay package is a once-in-a-lifetime exploration –

snorkelling with manta rays. Owing to the abundance of krill and plankton that accumulates in Hanifaru Bay during the season, bear witness to the annual migration of these mysterious creatures as they feed.

From the ocean to the sky, the grand finale in the package revolves around the universe. With its proximity to the equator, the Maldives is truly an astronomer's paradise and Anantara Kihavah is the perfect place for spectacular views of both the southern and northern skies. Custom-built for such stargazing encounters, SKY is a unique cocktail bar and, according to the resort, is home to the most powerful telescope in the Indian Ocean, while being the only over water observatory in the Maldives. The bar proffers front-row seats on low oversized daybeds to ocean views from every vantage point during the day,

and at night, the open roof deck comes alive, where guests can absorb knowledge imparted by the resort's Sky Guru.

A choice of accommodation options awaits – guests can choose either a beach pool villa or an over water pool villa poised over the calm lagoon. Each hideaway boasts a large infinity pool, dining pavilion, spacious wooden sundeck and ample lounging areas with special features. All villas feature his and hers walk-in wardrobes, rain showers, outdoor showers and over-sized bathtubs big enough for two, while a sunken glass-bottom bathtub in the over water pool villas offers a mesmerising underwater view. Seamless style is achieved with light, airy, contemporary interiors featuring local accents in every room. Further enhancing the experience, all villas are serviced by a personal Villa Host, 24/7.

To book, call +960 664 4111, or email reservations.maldives@anantara.com

Scan the QR code for more information on Anantara Kihavah Maldives Villas' 'Best of Maldives' package:



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The threats that plastic pollution and overfishing pose to the health of our oceans is clear — without adequate protections and corporate responsibility, we face creating irreversible damage and the collapse of some of the most important food sources in the world.

Matt Wenger, PADI Regional Manager and Ocean Conservationist has dedicated a significant amount of time to drive awareness towards the impacts on oceans from human activities that are threatening the health of the world's oceans. Matt explains more about where his passion for ocean conservation comes from, the challenges and opportunities in the diving industry in an exclusive interview below:

Matt, please tell us a little bit about your journey to PADI? How did it all begin?

I started diving at a young age, fascinated by the adventure and beauty underwater. With a background in the hospitality industry in Switzerland, I had the opportunity to do an internship at a resort in the Caribbean, where I had the chance to climb the ladder in the PADI certification system during my days off. Eventually I became a PADI professional in 1998. It was very clear

to me that I wanted to stay in the diving industry and pursue my dreams of travelling to some of the most beautiful countries in the world, while meeting amazing people.

Where does your inspiration stem from, in terms of becoming a professional diver and a part of the exciting diving industry? Have you always loved the ocean?

Although growing up, I was surrounded by

“***Dive tourism is a critical part of protecting the ocean, because people are most prepared to protect the things that they understand.***”

mountains, I always loved being in the water. Scuba diving was just the perfect activity to combine both my favourite hobbies; travelling and diving.

I think my biggest inspiration was watching the adventures of Jacques Cousteau on TV as a child. And in later years, my former boss and mentor, Marco Zubrod, was a key figure in my life and I need to thank him for all that he has done for me. He shaped me professionally, which led me to where I am today.

How many dive locations have you visited around the world and which is your favourite spot? What's next on your dive locations bucket list?

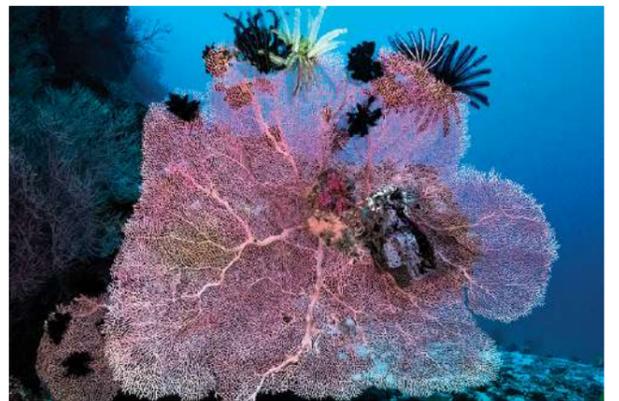
I have pretty much been all over the world, thanks to my job as a PADI Scuba Instructor, and later, as an employee of the PADI organisation itself. In my early professional years, I was mostly in the Caribbean, and then in South East Asia.

The Maldives has a very special part in my life; not only did I meet my wife there eleven years ago, but I had, as well, the opportunity to work as Dive Centre Manager for Silver Sands at Anantara, as well as for the Park Hyatt brand at Hadahaa. I was offered the PADI Regional Manager role in 2015, which allows me to travel within the archipelago and visit some of the most amazing resorts and beautiful local islands.

I'd love to explore Indonesia more – in particular, Raja Ampat. And certainly, on my bucket list would be the Chagos Islands, just south of the Maldives.

How long did it take you to become certified as a PADI Course Director and Examiner. What was the process like?

I became a PADI professional in 1998 and during the subsequent years continued my professional career. In 2011, I became a PADI Course Director in the Dominican Republic.



The PADI Course Director programme (CDTC) is very demanding and, at the same time, a rewarding experience. We were 35 candidates from all over the world participating in the two-week programme. We arrived all as strangers but left as good friends, I have fond memories indeed.

In terms of diver training certification, how would you benchmark PADI-qualified trainers?

PADI members are the most in-demand scuba professionals in the world. The success of PADI's educational system comes from the training and preparation of PADI Instructors (including the unique Instructor Development Course and Instructor Examination), the world class educational systems that are used, as well as the dedication and professionalism of PADI members everywhere.

What are some of your proudest moments in the sphere of diving?

Some of my proudest moments must have been diving with my elder daughter and my wife. We had the opportunity to stay a few days at the Six Senses in Laamu, and the reefs there are just amazing.

I think professionally, my proudest moment was diving with our CEO and President Dr. Drew Richardson. He visited the Maldives in 2018 for an event, Euro-Divers Maldives, organised by LUX* South Ari Atoll.

If you HAD to choose, what would your favourite underwater creature to observe be?

Uffff, that's a tough question! I guess I would have to go with the spotted eagle ray and the juvenile box fish. But to be fair to the other underwater creatures, I actually love them all, they are all my favourites.

What is the one biggest challenge faced in the diving industry?

Our oceans are under incredible pressure from mankind's activities – the damage caused to reefs through plastic pollution and climate change represent the single biggest threat to the diving industry.

The only way to overcome this is through sustained, long-term actions and habit-changes of the global population. PADI's tag line – Seek Adventure, Save the Ocean – is a rallying call to divers everywhere to join us in our quest for one billion torchbearers who are ready to help make these changes.

And how, exactly, can becoming a diver or Dive Tourism in general, encourage people to look at how they treat the ocean or what they could do to conserve the marine environment?

Dive tourism is a critical part of protecting the ocean, because people are most prepared to protect the things that they understand. By introducing the world to scuba, PADI has helped raise awareness of this important issue – and by bringing together one billion torchbearers over the coming years, we will be able to instigate real change in the way the world interacts with our oceans.

What would be your key advice to the younger generations who are interested in becoming professional divers?

Diving represents a career like no other – a chance to work in nature alongside wonderful people and in incredible places. It's not always easy, but it is always rewarding! Be sure to train thoroughly and to never stop learning!

EVENTS & AWARDS

ADEX Back2Blue Announces Ocean Clean-Up World Record Attempt Scheduled to Take Place in the Maldives

19-24/02/2022
MALDIVES

ADEX back2blue DIVERS RETREAT SOUTH ASIA EDITION

BEACH/OCEAN
CLEANUP
WORLD RECORD ATTEMPT
22/02/2022



Asia Dive Expo (ADEX) popularly known as the longest running scuba dive event organizer in Asia has launched Adex Back2Blue Maldives Retreat along with an ocean clean-up world record attempt.

During the inaugural name revealing digital meet, Maldivian Ministers, Hon. Minister of Tourism Dr. Abdulla Mausoom and Hon. Minister of Economic Development Uz. Fayyaz Ismail took part and

conveyed the message that the best support will be provided by the government to make the ADEX Back2Blue retreat a successful one.

Additionally, Ahmed Gabr who holds the current deepest scuba dive world record joined the conversation and stated that he would be part of the Adex Back2Blue as a person who had also formerly held the world record of largest ocean clean up with 624 participants in 2014.

The event will be a 5 nights and 6 days festival, engaged with awareness, diving, education, business networking and many other activities celebrating Back2Blue.

Velana International Airport Celebrates 55th Year Anniversary

Maldives Airports Company Ltd (MACL) celebrates Velana International Airport's (VIA) 55th anniversary on April 12, 2021. To mark the occasion, a flag hoisting ceremony was held at 0600 hours at VIA. The Ceremony was graced by the Minister of Tourism Dr Abdulla Mausoom with MACL's Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director Mr. Gordon Andrew Stewart. The Ceremony was joined by MACL senior management team and airport stakeholders.

Addressing at the event, MACL CEO and MD Mr. Gordon congratulated the employees on the occasion and recognized the staff commending their hard work and dedication last year during the COVID-19 pandemic. CEO and MD Mr. Gordon said, "I am honestly really very proud of the job each and every one of you has carried out for MACL and our Airport. I have been really impressed with how quickly we have been able to act and how well our airport recovery plan was executed. You all did exceptionally well and showcased our airport as one of the safest airports in the world and I am really proud of you all for what we have achieved together."

Speaking about the future of the Airport, Mr. Gordon stated "This year alone we plan to complete the world's biggest Seaplane Terminal, a modern VIP/CIP Terminal, new Aprons, new Runway, new Cargo Terminal and early next year a new Fuel Farm. All these will dramatically improve the services offered



to our customers and I am excited for our airline partners and stakeholders for the world class services they will soon receive. Apart from this, we are working on speeding up progress, which was affected by COVID and targeting an official handover during the third quarter of this year."

Conversing at the event Honorable Minister of Tourism Abdulla Mausoom said, "I am glad and proud that during the pandemic the airport operation continued smoothly. This shows the dedication of the

airport staff and stakeholders. Over the past years VIA has improved tremendously with its services in terms of handling capacity and infrastructure." The Minister also thanked President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih for the drive to boost the Tourism Industry of the Maldives.

The ceremony was concluded with a special prayer along with a ceremonial cake cut. VIA was opened by former President of the Maldives Mr. Ibrahim Nasir on April 12, 1966.

VIP TERMINAL OPENING SOON



MOVERS & SHAKERS

Siyam World Appoints Tom McLoughlin as Island Chief and General Manager

Siyam World, Maldives, a thrilling and bold new addition to the Sun Siyam Resorts portfolio, has appointed hospitality trailblazer Tom McLoughlin as Island Chief and General Manager ahead of its scheduled opening in Q4, 2021.



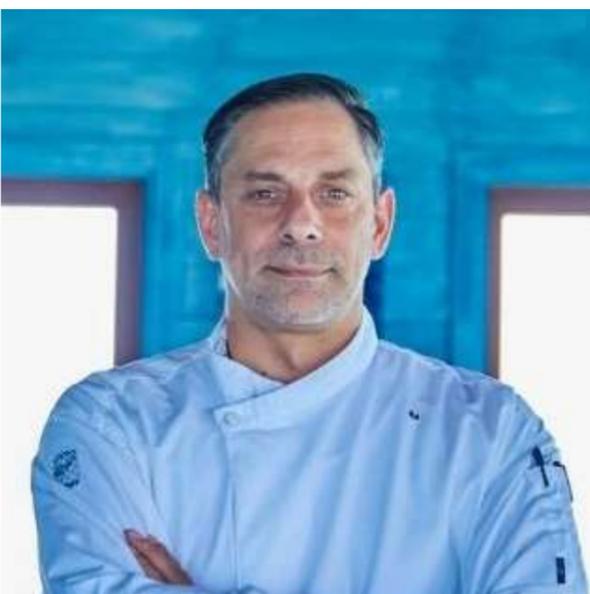
Unconventional disruptor and daring visionary, McLoughlin has a proven track record of spearheading innovative and iconic island concepts that have driven the evolution of the modern Maldives hospitality industry, such as Hilton Rangali (subsequently rebranded as Conrad), Dhoni Mighili in 2003, Huvafen Fushi in 2004, Amilla Fushi in 2014, and Finolhu in 2016. He has made the Maldives his home for two decades, and his expertise in helping owners create extraordinary resort experiences is evident. McLoughlin began his hospitality career with global brands including Accor and Hilton International. With extensive know-how in food and beverage, leisure and luxury travel, asset management and spa operations, he is set to support the owners and local management team in bringing Siyam World to life.

The creators behind Siyam World strongly believe in local capabilities and have made it their mission to develop Maldivian talent in the hospitality industry by aiming for a whopping 80 percent local employment rate. With the aspiration of building a resort concept on traditional roots, the training, employment and development of local talent has already begun – including at higher management level.

Siyam World, Maldives is located in the popular Noonu Atoll, 40-minutes' direct seaplane ride from Velana International Airport, and also accessible via a 30-minute domestic flight to Maafaru Airport followed by a 15-minute speedboat trip. The island resort boasts an enticing variety of rooms and residences and classifies as a five-star all-inclusive resort unlike any other. At the 54-hectare Siyam World, there are a dozen different bars and restaurants to choose from and an endless array of 'never-before-seen' experiences to enjoy. This is a new resort that offers fun-loving, open minded guests the freedom to roam, socialise and engage in an island community. With its uncompromisingly quirky "I can have it all" perception, comes a deep-rooted soul and a unique approach to everything.

Komandoo Maldives Welcomes Back Christian Wiedenmann as Executive Chef

After leaving in 2013 to continue his culinary journey back in Germany, Chef Christian has returned to his home away from home, at Komandoo Island Resort & Spa.



Hailing from Germany, Chef Christian completed his Hotel Caravelle Diploma as Certified Chef in Culinary Arts in 1994. He has over three decades of culinary experience gained across different countries, including Ireland, the Philippines and the Maldives, where he has held various positions in upscale hotels, island resorts, and several Michelin-starred restaurants.

Known for his creatively-prepared dishes and unique

interpretations of local and international recipes, Chef Christian follows the fine-tuned tradition of using only the finest local produce and the freshest ingredients. In his current role, he is in charge of all menu creation and culinary operations in all of its outlets at Komandoo, including the overwater fin dining restaurant, Aqua and the main buffet restaurant, Falhu. Guests can also enjoy Chef Christian and his team's culinary offerings through beach dinners, in-villa dining and other destination-inspired culinary experiences offered at the adults-only resort.

To learn more about dining experiences at Komandoo Maldives:



Coupling the beauty of the Maldives with the charm of a small resort, Komandoo is custom-made for romance. Award-winning attentiveness and a range of leisure activities guarantee a laid-back retreat, perfect for your honeymoon, a tranquil romantic escape or a getaway with friends. Komandoo is situated in the Lhaviyani Atoll, a scenic 40-minute seaplane experience from Velana International Airport.

The Ritz-Carlton Maldives, Fari Islands, Appoints Jacqueline Rose Szarmach as Sommelier



Spending 2 years in France and Italy performing various roles such as Harvest Cellar Hand and Master Class Manager has further enhanced Jacqueline's experience.

Prior to joining The Ritz-Carlton Maldives, Jacqueline worked with Cheval Blanc Randheli, Maldives, performing the role of Sommelier. She also has a Wine and Management Diploma and WSET 2 certification, and continues to cultivate her career as a Sommelier.

Jacqueline managed the inventory, purchasing and wine sales for Cheval Blanc for over two years. She crafted wine pairings for multi-course dinners and special occasion menus. Jacqueline was also in-charge of selecting wines for large private parties based on the guests' varied preferences.

The Ritz Carlton Maldives is located on Fari Islands, in the North Malé Atoll of the Maldives, which is a 45-minute journey by speedboat or a 10-minute seaplane flight from Malé International Airport. The resort features white sandy beaches, turquoise lagoons and coral reefs with marine life.

Shaped by the Maldivian sun and shored by the Indian Ocean, guest villas at The Ritz Carlton Maldives, Fari Island are expected to range in size from one to three bedrooms, featuring the refined elegance and legendary service that define The Ritz-Carlton brand. The property is also expected to offer a choice of outstanding culinary venues serving an array of international and local cuisines, in addition to a full suite of fitness and recreational facilities including a signature Ritz-Carlton Spa.

Martin Van Der Reijden Appointed General Manager at Cora Cora Maldives

Cora Cora Maldives has appointed Martin van der Reijden as General Manager of the exciting new resort, set to open in the unspoilt Raa Atoll on October 1, 2021.



Martin has decades of experience with major hotel projects, including Crossroads, LUX* North Malé Atoll, Per Aquum Resorts and 16 years with Hilton International. Having worked in the Maldives for the past 10 years, Martin has become known in the industry for his solid expertise in leading all aspects of pre-opening, from planning and construction to team-building, finance and IT infrastructure. He has a passion for the Maldives and strongly supports local talents. As a former managing director for hotel interior design company Miaja Design, he is well-placed to ensure a strong design aesthetic, which reflects the setting and culture of the resort.

The redevelopment of Cora Cora Maldives will see

the island, 45 minutes by seaplane from Malé, open with 100 villas, split between over-water and beach-front. Positioned as an affordable luxury all-inclusive resort with a unique cultural offering, it will appeal to couples and families from a wide range of destinations, including Asia, Europe, Middle East and the UK. The villa interiors will have a completely new visual aesthetic, with lighter, brighter colours.

When guests aren't snorkelling or diving in the island's coral-rich waters or relaxing on the sugar-soft white-sand beaches that fringe the island, they can dine at four restaurants, sip cocktails at two bars, be pampered at the spa pavilion, work on their fitness at the gym and

watersports centre or take their pick of the resort's new swimming pools. The island's layout and placement of villas will mean couples can relax in a tranquil setting while families can have fun in their own private space or at the island's kids' club. Unique to the Maldives, the resort includes a museum of Maldivian art and culture, with more than 400 artefacts and artworks. Working with a renowned local artist, the villas will also feature original Maldivian artworks. Cora Cora Maldives will also offer a very attractive Premium All-inclusive Meal Plan, created by Culinary Director Umberto Piccolini, who also previously worked with Martin at Crossroads.



IN THE NEWS

Ministry of Tourism and UNDP Sign 'Reimagining Tourism' Project

The Ministry of Tourism and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in the Maldives have signed the "GoM-UNDP Reimagining Tourism" project which aims to transform tourism in the Maldives with a focus on diversification of tourism, and enhanced community engagement.

Speaking at the signing ceremony of the project, Minister of Tourism Hon. Dr. Abdulla Mausoom emphasized on the meaningful inclusion of women and youth towards sustainable development of tourism. The Minister further highlighted the role of local councils in local tourism planning and development, and the need to incorporate tourism in the land use plans.

The project will support; sustainable local island tourism development planning through training of local stakeholders on sustainable tourism; creation of sustainability thresholds for tourism development in local islands, and the creation of a decentralized local tourism audit mechanism; incorporating sustainability indicators; marketing of local tourism opportunities; capitalizing on island-specific brand narratives built on unique natural cultural and historical assets of islands; and reskilling of young people and women for greater participation in the tourism value chain.

UNDP Resident Representative Akiko Fujii spoke about the need to think of a different future for tourism for countries such as the Maldives, belonging to the Small Island Developing States



(SIDs) ecosystem. "The experience of the Maldives with this project, the successes, failures (if any), challenges and lessons learnt will be of much value to other SIDs who also find themselves grappling with challenges similar to the Maldives. I am happy to note that the project contributes to achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda," said Akiko Fujii.

A joint initiative between the Government and UNDP Maldives, the 'Reimagining Tourism' project will explore, develop and test pathways for making tourism in the country more inclusive, resilient and

sustainable. The project will be implemented with a focus on local tourism segment in Laamu Atoll, over a period of 18 months. The project is funded through UNDP Core Funds under its Rapid Financing Facility and is a part of the global UNDP's raised commitment to supporting SIDS countries' COVID-19 sustainable recovery.

The successful implementation of the project will demonstrate sustainable models for enhancing the dividend to nature and local communities from tourism, that could potentially be grown across the country.

MTCC Commences Land Reclamation for Meemu Airport Project

Maldives Transport and Contracting Company Plc (MTCC) has kick-started the land reclamation work required for the Meemu Airport Development Project.



Joined by the CEO of MTCC, Adam Azim, a small ceremony was held on April 6, on the island of Muli in Meemu Atoll, marking the beginning of the operation.

The project, worth MVR 221.733 million (USD 14.3 million), is contracted to be completed in one year. The airport is under development as part of the current administration's pledge to have an airport within a thirty-five-minute distance from each island of the Maldives.

The scope of the project work includes land reclamation of 14 hectares, implementation of coastal protection of over 1,812 metres, and the construction of a runway measuring up to 1,200 by 30 metres.

Currently, there are three international airports and fourteen domestic airports in operation across the Maldives. The Meemu Airport development project was awarded to MTCC on February 28, 2021.

Visit Maldives and Ministry of Tourism Launch 'I'm Vaccinated' Campaign



Visit Maldives together with the Ministry of Tourism have kicked-off the "I'm Vaccinated" campaign, which will share a positive message regarding the vaccination of staff working in the tourism sector, while also promoting the initiatives undertaken to ensure that the Maldives remains one of the safest destinations in the world for travellers.

Under this campaign, the ultimate target is to make Maldives the first fully vaccinated tourism sector in the world. Along with the convenient geographical formation of the islands which offer natural physical distancing, and the stringent health and safety measures in place, a fully vaccinated tourism sector will become an added advantage in encouraging tourists to visit the destination.

The campaign was launched during a special press event held on April 28, 2021 organised by Visit Maldives and the Ministry of Tourism. The event was joined by the Minister of Tourism, Minister of State of the Ministry of Health, Secretary General of Guesthouse Association of Maldives and Vice Chairman of Maldives Association of Tourism Industry.

The event commenced with opening remarks by the Minister of Tourism Hon. Dr. Abdulla Mausoom. The Minister remarked upon the impact of COVID-19 on the tourism industry during 2020 and emphasized on the immense sacrifice, effort and hard work invested by the health care industry, tourism industry, and all members of the Maldivian society. The Minister added that being able to provide vaccination to members in the tourism industry was a huge accomplishment. The Minister officially initiated the 'I'm Vaccinated' campaign followed by a short video showcasing the 'I'm Vaccinated' logo.

Speaking at the ceremony, Minister of State for Health, Dr. Shah Abdulla Mahir stated that over 65 percent of the eligible Maldivian population and over 90% of those eligible in the tourism industry have been vaccinated. Dr. Shah further placed importance on practicing health and safety measures regardless of the vaccination and emphasized on the importance of achieving herd immunity. He expressed thanks towards MMPRC and the Ministry of Tourism for launching the 'I'm Vaccinated' campaign which he believes will promote the vaccination drive and motivate facilities in the tourism industry to vaccinate their staff.

MMPRC presented the esteemed delegation with a special 'I'm Vaccinated' badge. The badge will be presented to members of the tourism industry who have received the full, prescribed dose(s) of the COVID-19 vaccine.

Following the launch of the programme, the Managing Director of Maldives Marketing and Public Relations Corporation (MMPRC), Thoyyib Mohamed, stated that the purpose of the 'I'm Vaccination' campaign is to promote vaccination for all members in the tourism industry and for Maldives to have the first fully-vaccinated tourism industry in the world. Thoyyib Mohamed also unveiled a microsite that will be launched under the 'I'm Vaccinated' Campaign and social media activities that will be initiated alongside.

The microsite will display a counter showcasing the number of tourist industry staff vaccinations, as well as information regarding registration for vaccination of employees and the latest HPA guidelines.

Furthermore, the social media component of the

campaign will present images and videos of workers in the tourism industry with a pinned vaccination badge that will be presented to them by Visit Maldives once they receive the prescribed dose(s) of the COVID-19 vaccination. The social media campaign will further help advertise the Maldives as a 'safe haven' across the globe.

Speaking at the conference, Secretary General of the Guesthouse Association of Maldives (GAM), Saudhulla Ahmed Hassan Didi, highlighted the impact of COVID-19 on the guesthouse industry and island communities.

Vice Chairman of the Maldives Association of Tourism Industry (MATI), Salah Shihab recognised the sacrifice undertaken by members of the tourism industry who had to stay apart from their families during the pandemic, stating that the 'I'm Vaccinated' campaign gives hope to workers across the industry.

The campaign aims to uplift the destination's name in the global market and reassure travellers that the Maldives will further remain as one of the safest destinations to travel to during this unprecedented time. Additionally, the campaign aims to keep travellers from all over the world well-informed on the efforts and investments allocated towards ensuring the safety of both, the local population and travellers.

The Maldives initiated the administration of the COVID-19 vaccine on February 1, 2021. The government aims to provide free COVID-19 vaccine to all citizens and residents of the Maldives in the upcoming months. The initiation of the vaccination drive is bound to offer hope to the local population, as well as ensure the safety of tourists.

IN THE NEWS

Foundation Laying Ceremony of One Central Park

Assotech Realty, one of the India's well-known developers, famous for their iconic projects in housing, offices, retail and hospitality development held the "Grand Foundation-Laying Ceremony of One Central Park" in Hulhumalé, Maldives, on April 27, 2021.



The event was co-hosted by Rasheed Carpentry and Construction Pvt Ltd (RCC) as the partnered contractor. Sandal Mauritius, a special purpose vehicle of Assotech Realty, will take up the development of One Central Park, located in the heart of the country's "Smart City" – Hulhumalé; the very first city, meticulously planned to offer a superior living alternative to

the citizens of Maldives.

Welcome speech and project brief was given by developer and Managing Director of Sandal Mauritius - Assotech Group, Neeraj Gulati, who highlighted the proactive support provided by the Chief Guest Hon. Mohamed Aslam, Minister of National Planning, Housing and Infrastructure. Neeraj Gulati

further stated that One Central Park is a project that meets the aspirations of young, modern, first time home buyers who want a house which fulfils the needs of a lifestyle they want to live, adding that 75% of the bookings have been virtually sold.

Hon. Minister Aslam noted: "This project will surely make dreams come true for many Maldivians, with the trust and support from Housing Development Corporation Ltd (HDC) and leading building contractor in the Maldives – RCC. This is a strong foundation which will be built for our future generations."

A vote of thanks on behalf of the contractor was given by Colonel (Rtd.) Mohamed Nazim, Chairman of RCC. Additionally, gratitude was expressed towards the High Commissioner of India to Maldives, H. E. Shir Sunjay Sudhir, for the continuous support and for introducing RCC to the international developers. He further noted that the project will set a benchmark, opening

the doors for Maldivian companies to work with international developers. Colonel Nazim provided full assurance to buyers, Ministers, financial institutions and all the special invitees, noting: "The RCC team will finish the project on time as per schedule and handover the project with quality, by February 2023".

The Foundation-Laying Ceremony of One Central Park was participated by; Minister of National Planning, Housing and Infrastructure Hon. Mohamed Aslam, Minister of State for National Planning, Housing and Infrastructure Akram Kamaaluddin, Managing Director of Sandal Mauritius, Assotech Group, Neeraj Gulati, and Managing Director of HDC Suhail Ahmed. Special invitees from the government, parliament, Indian High Commission, financial institutions, potential investors and the media attended the event. For bookings and more information: www.assotech.mv

Ooredoo 5G Now Enabled for Customers Using iPhone 12 Within Greater Male'

Ooredoo Maldives announces that Ooredoo 5G has been enabled for all Postpaid and Prepaid customers using iPhone 12 handsets across Ooredoo 5G enabled locations within Greater Male'.

Ooredoo Maldives says that customers using iPhone 12 are required to update the software to iOS 14.5 or a later version to enjoy the superfast speeds of the Ooredoo 5G network.

The company announced the commercial launch of its 5G services in the Maldives in December 2020, covering a large percentage of the capital city of Malé, including key business hubs, hospitals, public spaces and more. Ooredoo Maldives further notes that 5G technology not only promises a fundamental boost in speed, but offers significantly lower latencies, increased capacities and is much more reliable. With the availability of 5G on handsets, customers can enjoy uninterrupted gaming on-the-go and even let users download a whole season of their favourite show in a flash.

With the extension of 5G availability to iPhone 12, Ooredoo Prepaid and Postpaid customers using

Ooredoo 5G now available on iPhone 12

Order now on Moolee

Update iOS 14.5 or later version to enable

ooredoo

iPhone 12, Huawei P40 Pro, Samsung Galaxy Note 20, Note 20 Ultra and Samsung Galaxy S21, S21+ & S21 Ultra devices can now enjoy the superfast speeds of Ooredoo 5G.

iPhone 12 handsets along with many latest handsets are available for purchase via Ooredoo ecommerce

platform, Moolee on Ooredoo app with free nationwide delivery. The handsets can also be acquired on installment plan via Maldives Islamic Bank.

To place your order, visit: <http://ore.do/app>

WTTC Launches Initiative to Support Women in Travel & Tourism



The world's leading travel and tourism leaders pledged to work towards women's equality and boost female representation in leadership roles in an announcement before the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC).

The commitment came as WTTC, which represents the Travel & Tourism private sector, launched its Women's Initiative, at its Global Summit in Cancun, with the help of professional tennis player and 18 Grand Slam singles title winner, Martina Navratilova.

WTTC President & CEO Gloria Guevara unveiled the public-private-academic partnership to promote diversity and drive inclusivity which will help lead the way to achieving equality for women throughout Travel & Tourism.

Next, was the signing of the WTTC Cancun Women's Declaration to support women, which recognised their contribution around the world and the importance of an equal equitable environment to enable them to thrive as leaders, entrepreneurs, and innovators. The drive committed signatories to provide equal opportunities for women by removing barriers, ensuring fair treatment, and encouraging greater financial, professional, and social independence.

Gloria Guevara, WTTC President & CEO, said: "As the first female President and CEO of WTTC, it is an honour to champion this important initiative. The pledge made today with the launch of the first Women's Initiative in Travel & Tourism by a combination of the

private, public and academic sectors to work towards women's equality, marks a significant step forward.

"Globally, women have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic which has exacerbated the pay gap, the opportunity gap and the shocking lack of senior positions and leadership roles across the Travel & Tourism sector.

"This needs to be changed, WTTC research shows women play a vital role and represented 54% of Travel & Tourism's employment worldwide. Yet while more than half the sector is accounted for by women, all too few occupy any senior or strategic roles. Therefore, I'm delighted to share a platform today with one of the world's greatest ever tennis players, Martina Navratilova, to help launch WTTC's ground-breaking Women's Initiative."

Martina Navratilova said: "Women have always had to outperform men, and whilst things are changing for the better, it is still a fight and a constant battle. Change happens much quicker when it comes from the top. Companies would be more profitable if more women were in positions of power and boardrooms were less homogenous and reflected the diversity of their customers. This is why I am delighted to be here with WTTC on the day it launches its Women's Initiative. As an advocate for women's rights, I know every act we take will help change the lives of women everywhere and make the world a fairer and better place."

For the private sector in the short term, the Women's Initiative has two core elements; developing skills and creating formal sponsorship and mentorship programmes for young women in business.

It will encourage women to bring in new ideas and skills to broaden the wealth of experience and expertise from women at all levels across the entire Travel & Tourism sector. Senior women leaders will also be empowered to become mentors and share their skills and experience with the next generation of female Travel & Tourism leaders to nurture and develop new talent.

Where possible, companies will also be asked to assign a senior executive or Board member to be a sponsor for gender diversity and inclusion, who is accountable for progress. The private sector pledged to increase female representation of leadership positions by 30-50% and aim toward increasing by a third, the representation of women to board levels and C-suites, by 2030.

There will also be a commitment to identify opportunities to reduce any gender pay gaps and implement gender diverse slate requirement for all open roles and to each year share progress and publish an action plan to achieve their goals.

According to WTTC data, in 2019 before the pandemic struck, the Travel & Tourism sector accounted for 10.4% of global GDP and supported the livelihoods of 334 million people.

BON APPÉTIT

COCONUT SPHERE



Born in Australia and having lived in Singapore, 26-year-old Trent Richardson manages the pastry team at LUX* North Malé Atoll as Executive Pastry Chef of the luxurious property.

“My inspiration comes from using locally-sourced fresh ingredients and adding my touch to it.”

Coconut Ganache:

1.5 pcs	Gelatin sheets (Gold)
10g	Water
500g	Coconut puree
50g	White chocolate
250g	Cream
2pcs	Vanilla Bean

Method:

1. The day before, put the gelatin to soak in cold water.
2. Heat the coconut puree until it boils, then pour it over the chopped white chocolate.
3. Mix to melt it well. Add the squeezed gelatin while the mixture is still hot.
4. Store 12 hours in the refrigerator.

Exotic Compote:

• 24g	Caster Sugar
• 2pcs	Vanilla Bean
• 300g	Mango Puree
• 96g	Passion Fruit Puree
• 5g of	NH Pectin
• 250g	Fresh Pineapple
• 200g	Fresh Mango

Method:

1. Cut the pineapple and mango into small cubes.
2. Heat the vanilla and the purees to 40 ° C then add the sugar mixed with the pectin.
3. Bring to a boil before adding the pineapple and mango cubes.
4. Cool in the chiller overnight.
5. Pour into the desired sphere molds and freeze before use.

Chocolate Coating:

• 250g	Cocoa butter
• 250g	Dark Chocolate

Method:

1. Melt the cocoa butter and the dark chocolate separately in the microwave or over a double boiler.
2. Combine the chocolate and the cocoa butter in a container with a blender.
3. Use when the mixture is between 35°C – 45°C.

To assemble:

1. Whip the coconut ganache using a whisk or a mixer (with the whisk attachment) to soft peaks.
2. Place the whipped coconut ganache in a piping bag and pipe half into a sphere mold.
3. Unmold exotic compote inner sphere insert from the mold and place on top of the coconut ganache.
4. Pipe the remaining whipped ganache on top of the exotic compote to completely cover the insert.
5. Freeze the mold over night before removing from the mold.
6. Using a skewer dip the ball in the chocolate coating then brush the sides of the ball to give a coconut appearance.
7. Defrost for 2 hours.

Equipment:

1. AF001- 55MM PAVONI SPHERE MOLD
2. AF002- 45MM PAVONI SPHERE MOLD
3. Kitchen Aid Mixer
4. Blender



Courtesy of
Executive Pastry Chef Trent Richardson
LUX* North Malé Atoll



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Frankly Speaking

In the year 2010, shark fisheries and the sale of any shark products were banned in the Maldives by law. Eleven years since the ban, the local Fishing Industry has been raising concerns on fish that are caught that's been half-eaten by sharks due to over population of the species. Following these concerns from local fishermen, the Ministry of Fisheries, Marine Resources and Agriculture suggested to have a dialogue with stakeholders to allow shark fisheries. This opinion platform to lift the ban has raised concerns among the country's tourism industry, more importantly, within the Diving Industry. What is your take on this controversial matter on Shark Fisheries vs The Diving Industry?



Saazu Saeed
 Founder of Save Our Waves
 Former VP of Divers association

Both, the fisheries and tourism industries, are important for our country. While the contribution to our GDP is higher from the tourism sector, a very high proportion of the population still earn their income from the fisheries sector.

We all understand that sharks are important for our coral reefs to thrive, to supply our fishermen with a healthy fish stock and to reap tourism benefits from our underwater beauty. There are also concerns from some fisher groups that there is high predation, but this has not been researched. This perception that sharks are affecting fisheries has increased over the last few years, fuelled by public statements from influential people calling to lift the shark ban. This is no doubt what has facilitated the black market trade that has been happening right under our eyes at a very large scale. The Ministry's public statement that they were considering lifting the ban was very worrisome for us all because we have seen how the loss of sharks effect diving in the Maldives.

I think the best way to tackle this is through education. There has been very little effort to educate the public or share research findings since the ban in 2010 which has led us to the situation we are in today. State authorities must reassure the public that they will stop the black market trade before it causes further damage and that they will not lift the ban.



Alex Bryant
 Managing Director
 Emperor Divers

There is definitely not an over population of sharks. The reality is that sharks are an endangered species globally. The biggest problem is that overfishing, globally, has reduced the yield fishermen are able to catch. This, paired with a reduction in demand for fish in Western countries due to environmental concerns, and globally during Covid-19, due to restaurants being closed, has resulted in smaller catches at lower prices per kg. This has nothing to do with sharks eating catches at all. This is a result of fishermen being unhappy due to lower prices and smaller catches. But at the end of the day, tourism directly and indirectly contributes over 90% of the Maldives economy, and allowing shark fishing again would be viewed very negatively, especially to higher yielding western markets. Add to this the reality that if you kill a shark a small group gets a relatively small amount of money once, while if you keep a shark alive it creates infinite revenue as an attraction, as it will breed and producing more sharks that will create recurring revenue forever.



Hussain Rasheed Sendi
 Retired PADI Course Director
 Inductee of the 2019 International Scuba Diving Hall of Fame

The shark population hasn't reached anywhere even close to what I've seen during the early 80's.

I read a recent interview of a fisherman who stated that from 10 to 16 tons of tuna caught, only a couple of them were actually snatched by sharks. Does this really mean that we need to eliminate the shark population? No way. What we need to do is to change our ways of "protection", or providing "himaayai". It's like haram or halaal. We need to find a way to make it halaal - meaning without the needless harming of any life or ecosystems. And for that we need more research and open dialogue for a duration of at least five years. During those five years, the Maldives should start initiatives to stop shark trade.

Sharks have become an integral part of our identity, essential to our dive industry. Having no sharks around would be like losing a part of our Maldivian identity.

I fear that my grandchildren may not be able to ever swim with sharks.



Donatella Telli
 Managing Director
 Luxury Yacht Maldives

In my opinion, reopening shark fishing is a huge mistake as it is known that sharks basically prey on sick, weakened, or injured fish fauna, therefore a natural rebalancing of all marine species would fail.

This ecological balance can be seen on land as well. For example, since the "wolf", also a predator, was reintroduced back into Yellowstone National Park in the USA, the entire ecological system has benefited enormously.

I do not believe that the problem derives from the depletion of fish fauna and that fishermen are no longer able to fish, but that they are only economic interests.

With the authorization of shark fishing, the diving industry would have tragic consequences as has already happened before.



Fayyaz Ibrahim
 Dive Instructor
 Divers Lodge Maldives

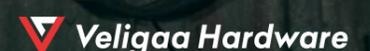
The complaint that sharks are a problem to the tuna fishery industry is a false propoganda spread by a few. However, some influential people are interested in "environment-unfriendly" fishing tactics that would get them huge, but obviously short-term, financial benefits. One of the reasons the dialogue was opened, was because of the push to introduce longline tuna fisheries in the Maldives, which would also lead to the bycatch of many sharks.

We have to consider the benefits of a good shark population in our seas and reefs. In places where we dive, the shark population is alarmingly less than we have seen at the start of tourism and diving in the Maldives. Even now there is shark fishery in the Maldives, which is illegal and is affecting the shark population. The law enforcement authorities' failure to tackle this illegal activity and black market trade clearly indicates the "powerfulness" of those involved.

Even though the dialogue is open, I trust that the government will not lift the ban. I call upon the authorities to stop illegal shark fisheries and trade in the Maldives.

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