

# The islandchief

travel news

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SriLankan Airlines Flying the Nation's Flag Globally for 43 Years

Pg: 04



South Asian Travel Awards 2022 Concluded Successfully at Adaaran Select Hudhuran Fushi

Pg: 17



Tourism Golden Year Gala Recognizes Contributors to the Success of Maldives' Tourism Over the Last 50 Years

Pg: 18



Neyvaa 2 - Breaking the Freediving World Record in the Maldives

Pg: 20

## DEEP PASSION

**EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW**  
with  
**Shafraz Naeem**  
Ocean 6|50  
Dive Instructor / Tek Dive Speaker

PAGE: 12

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Dear Readers,

Halloween might fall on the last day of the month, but let's be honest, the festivities really begin on October 1. As we compose this note in September, we've already noticed some resorts putting up their faux spider webs and Halloween-themed decorations, reminding us that we need to pick out a pumpkin soon and announcing that Pumpkin Spice Latte season has arrived!

Published monthly, the Islandchief continues to give our readers behind-the-scenes look at our region's most important industry, as well as the people who drive it. Tourism does not just happen. People do not show up here because "it's Maldives", traveler's today have many choices in a destination, especially coming out of a pandemic. It takes hard work and savvy marketing, selling, relationship-building and negotiating in a highly competitive global environment to convince them to choose Maldives, and then choose to return again and again. That's where we come in.

In this issue of your favorite tabloid magazine, we bring to you a world record-breaking individual in Maldives diving industry, Shafraz Naeem (Shaff) who attempted and succeeded the Ocean 6|50, having immersed in underwater for 50 hours straight! flip to page 12 to learn about Shaff's journey to the deep and his initiatives to protect the vulnerable marine environment of the Maldives.

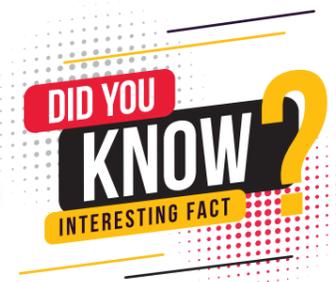
We also highlight the winners of the prestigious South Asian Travel Awards (SATA) 2022 and contributors to the success of Maldives tourism who received the President's Tourism Gold Award at the Gala held to commemorate the Golden Jubilee of Maldives Tourism on page 17 and 18.

Through this publication you will get to know some phenomenal culture bearers and good news about the resurgence of this industry. Do we have our share of challenges as a tourist destination? Sure. But the team at the Islandchief are optimistic about the future.

Thanks for reading. We'll see you in our next edition.

'till next time,

*The Islandchief Team*



### TODDY TAPPING

A traditional occupation of the Maldivians, Toddy Tapping or Raa Verikan has been a historically recognized aspect of the Maldives since the very early days. Toddy (Ruku Raa) is a juice extracted from the flower buds of the coconut Palm. As the flower buds are produced and reach the ripening stage, the Toddy Tapper will cut off the end of the bud and attach a pot made from coconut shells called a 'gudi'.

The pot is left overnight, and, in the morning, the sweet toddy is collected from the pot. It can also be refilled for a second time. Toddy is also used to make another Maldivian delicacy called 'Dhiyaa Hakuru', a thick liquid sugar, resembling honey.

According to historical records, toddy tappers in the Maldives had been known to provide supplies and help the previous kings and leaders including King Ali VI and Mohamed Thakurufaanu during the battles fought towards independence of the Maldives.

*Photo credits: Sabah Maldives*

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# Manta Air Partners with JA Manafaru to Commence Daily Flights to Hoarafushi Airport

Manta Air has signed with JA Manafaru to operate charter service to Hoarafushi Airport. As per the agreement, the airline has scheduled daily flights from Velana International Airport to Hoarafushi Airport.

On September 5, Manta's maiden passenger flight to Hoarafushi Airport was welcomed by the island's council members and celebrated with the Maldivian Boduberu music and dances. During a special ceremony held at the airport to commemorate the new service, Maldivian hospitality was highlighted with the presentation of a traditional 'Malaafai' by the island council.

According to Manta Air, the new service will be operated by its Beechcraft 1900D. The 18-seater aircraft is equipped with an air-conditioned, high ceiling cabin that has a standing height at the aisle of the aircraft. It is one of the fastest small aircraft currently available in the domestic market with speeds equivalent to that of the current ATR fleet in operation.

In addition to the daily charters to Hoarafushi



Airport, the Beechcraft 1900D will be available for private charter operations as well.

With the concept of a pre-published schedule available for a period of six months and also the option to book flights online, Manta Air wishes to make it more convenient for customers who prefer to fly with them, making sure the journey is effortless. Its seats are customized to provide the

best comfort with additional legroom in both comfort and sapphire class. So guests can be assured that the tropical way to fly will always be in comfort and luxury.

Manta's ambition is to provide a unique flying experience which is seamless, reliable and hospitable, while providing an amazing experience in the skies



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## ACROSS THE SKIES

## Villa Air Announces Partnership with RedBox



Villa Air has partnered with freight forwarding specialist Redbox to distribute general cargo and express items across Villa Air's domestic route network.

The agreement was signed on September 11, 2022 by Mr. Abdulla Nashid, Managing Director, on behalf of Villa Air, and by Mr. Ibrahim Faiz, Managing Director, on behalf of Redbox.

This partnership means that customers can expect quick and reliable transportation of goods to and from Alif Dhaal Atoll, Baa Atoll, and South Raa Atoll. Customers can contact Redbox on 3344555 or 7810026 on Viber; Redbox is located at G.Herethere 2nd Floor, Lonuziyaaraiy Magu.

Villa Air launched its airline brand 'Villa Air Flyme' on

March 14, 2011. The airline officially commenced flight operations on October 1, 2011 and are operating a fleet of ATR aircraft serving domestic routes within the Maldives. Villa Air's main hub is Velana International Airport and its maintenance base is located at Villa Airport Maamigili located in South Ari Atoll.

Initially starting with just one aircraft ATR-42 500 mainly operating between Velana International Airport, Villa International Airport and Dharavandhoo Domestic Airport, currently, with further expansion of its network, Flyme operates flights to several regional destinations across the Maldives.

## SriLankan Airlines Flying the Nation's Flag Globally for 43 Years

SriLankan Airlines has been the fabric of commercial aviation in Sri Lanka since the dawn of the airline 43 years ago. Launched on September 1, 1979, SriLankan Airlines' 43rd Anniversary is perhaps an opportune moment therefore to reflect back on the airline's greatest accomplishments, which are often intertwined with Sri Lanka's own milestones in aviation and tourism.

SriLankan's contribution to the economy of Sri Lanka as the country's flag carrier cannot be understated. The airline has been the ultimate gateway between Sri Lanka and the world. With a current all-Airbus fleet of 24 aircraft, SriLankan has been connecting Sri Lankans to 119 cities in 60 countries across continents through direct and codeshare operations. Moreover, SriLankan Airlines is the only airline to operate direct flights between Colombo and several global power cities including London; Paris; Frankfurt; Melbourne; Sydney; and Tokyo, enabling socio-economic ties with these markets.

SriLankan has also played a central role in introducing Sri Lanka and the country's spectacular heritage to discerning international travellers. SriLankan has for nearly half a century helped bridge distances; position Sri Lanka as one of the most desired holiday destinations; and link millions of passengers to Colombo, Southern India and the Maldives with expedient connections. Over 95 percent of passengers transiting via Bandaranaike International Airport are carried by SriLankan Airlines and SriLankan remains the most frequently booked airline to travel to Sri Lanka.

The proof is in the numbers. Between 1979 and now, SriLankan has served over 89 million passenger journeys for both local and foreign passengers – a number that is equal to the population of Sri Lanka, four times over. The airline is, unquestionably, a key foreign currency earner for Sri Lanka as over 85 per cent of its revenue is earned in foreign currency from international markets.

SriLankan Airlines has also powered economic activity across the supply chain of the travel and tourism trade of Sri Lanka. This includes creating jobs and supporting the livelihoods, even if indirectly, for thousands employed in the sector. Consequently, it has been estimated that SriLankan Airlines makes a significant contribution to Sri Lanka's gross domestic product.



Aside from passenger services, strategic business units of the airline such as SriLankan Cargo and SriLankan Engineering have all progressively contributed to the organization and country. SriLankan Cargo, stepped up its operations to fly essential goods and facilitated trade to and from Sri Lanka in the absence of other operators during the pandemic and effectively allowed the airline to redeploy resources for cargo operations in ensuring the survival of the airline as passenger travel ceased.

SriLankan Cargo has transported a whopping volume of over one million metric tons across borders solely in the past ten years. Similarly, SriLankan Engineering has amped its profile in the region and beyond for providing outstanding third-party maintenance services for other airlines; sealed many new contracts including five signed just this year; and earned several million dollars in the process.

Nevertheless, the path leading up to the 43rd anniversary of the national carrier has been a rollercoaster of sorts with many challenges along the way. SriLankan Airlines, however, has persisted over the years; adapting when the situation necessitated it

and extending steady support to the nation when needed. This has never been more evident than during times of national crisis.

Reflecting on the significance of the airline to the country, Ashok Pathirage, Chairman of SriLankan Airlines stated, "For the past four decades, we have been flag bearers of the nation through thick and thin. SriLankan Airlines has not only prevailed through each challenging chapter that the country has had to navigate through, but endeavored to help the country back on its feet. From sustaining travel and trade links between Sri Lanka and the world as other airlines cut back on flights to Sri Lanka due to the country's ongoing economic crisis to bringing down stranded Sri Lankans home during the thick of the pandemic in the recent past, SriLankan has always been a pillar of strength to the nation. The resilience of our legacy is really the resilience of our people, and I would like to thank every employee of SriLankan Airlines for their show of dedication and commitment that has seen us through difficult times."

Additionally, SriLankan Airlines has brought pride to the country with each international award brought home. While the awards won by SriLankan since 1979 are too numerous to list, the airline has won close to 50 prestigious international awards in the last decade alone. The most recently secured awards include Diamond status by the APEX Health and Safety Audit powered by SimpliFlying 2021; World's Leading Airline to the Indian Ocean by World Travel Awards 2021; APEX Passenger Choice Awards- Best WIFI in Central Asia 2022; and APEX Passenger Choice Awards- Best Cabin Service in Central Asia 2022.



IN A NUTSHELL

## Waldorf Astoria Maldives Ithaafushi Debuts First Zuma Restaurant in the Indian Ocean



Waldorf Astoria Maldives Ithaafushi unveils the latest addition to its collection of 11 distinctive culinary experiences with the debut of the world-renowned contemporary and elegant Japanese concept Zuma in the archipelago. With breathtaking views of the crystal-clear Indian Ocean combined with Zuma's unique style, the new restaurant is set to deliver a truly unforgettable experience to its international clientele.

Founded in London in 2002 by creator and co-founder Rainer Becker, and now present across 20 locations worldwide, the globally acclaimed Zuma is inspired by the authentic Japanese dining style – izakaya. It is an informal place for eating small plates and drinking under one roof.

Zuma Maldives is inspired by the beauty of its stunning location, complementing its surroundings with the use of natural materials and local design techniques. While the impressive roof looks like the gigantic samurai hat, the restaurant features a dramatic entrance combining elements of timber, light and granite creating an immersive optical illusion leading

guests into the vibrant dining space. The majestic island bar, robata (Japanese charcoal grill) and sushi counter take center stage in the middle of the venue and form the focal point for diners.

"We are thrilled to be bringing Zuma's international cuisine to the Maldives on the shores of such a breathtaking and iconic destination," said Zuma creator and co-founder Rainer Becker. "We share Waldorf Astoria's focus on exceptional attention to detail and look forward to delivering unmatched culinary experiences to resort guests with Zuma's award-winning menu."

Zuma Maldives will serve its specialty dishes made famous in its international outposts, including thinly sliced Sea Bass with Yuzu, Truffle Oil and Salmon Roe, Roasted Lobster, Shiso Ponzu Butter and Spicy Beef Tenderloin with Sesame, Red Chili and Sweet Soy, among others. The restaurant will also feature a dedicated lounge area where Zuma's signature beverages such as Lychee Rose Petal Martini, Zuma Colada or Chili and Passion Fruit Margarita, can be enjoyed as the sun sets over the lagoon.

# HONDA MARINE



## Marine Vibe

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## IN A NUTSHELL

## Soneva Launches Global Recruitment Campaign for Barefoot Guardians



Luxury hospitality pioneer Soneva has launched a global recruitment campaign to search for new Barefoot Guardians across its island resorts in the Maldives and Thailand. Much more than a traditional 'butler' service, Soneva's Barefoot Guardians are an

essential point of contact for guests from around the world – anticipating their every need, curating rare, unforgettable experiences, and embodying Soneva's Slow Life ethos.

Each Barefoot Guardian is responsible

for delivering Soneva's exceptional levels of personalized service to guests, ensuring that every moment of their stay goes far beyond their expectations. With no day ever quite the same, the role is based full-time at Soneva's award-winning resorts – Soneva Fushi and Soneva Jani in the Maldives, and Soneva Kiri in Thailand – where sustainability underlines the rhythms of daily life, and the barefoot commute takes you past leafy jungles, white sandy beaches and shimmering seas.

The role is open to candidates from around the world, particularly those who speak one or more languages in addition to fluency in English – including Russian, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Arabic, Spanish, German,

Cantonese and Mandarin. As an equal opportunities employer, Soneva celebrates diversity and is committed to creating an enriching career path and an inclusive, safe working environment for all of its hosts.

Potential candidates are invited to apply at: [careers-maldives@soneva.com](mailto:careers-maldives@soneva.com) – all applications must be written in English and include a CV, cover letter and a short, self-filmed video (maximum two minutes), explaining why they are the perfect fit for the role. More information about job openings and opportunities at Soneva can be found on Soneva's LinkedIn page.

## Wellness at its Best for Travellers at OBLU XPERIENCE Ailafushi's ELE | NA The Spa

OBLU XPERIENCE Ailafushi elevates tropical island living through smart services, playful design, and invigorating experiences. A 15-minute speedboat ride from Malé International Airport brings you to this newly opened, four-star resort. In the Maldivian language of Dhivehi, 'Aila' means family and 'Fushi' means island. In essence, the family island.

The resort features a sprawling multi-level spa, one of the largest in the Maldives. A haven of relaxation and wellness, ELE | NA The Spa is hidden amidst lush foliage and beautiful palm trees. Guests will be welcomed with a cleansing Aaram Tisane brewed with detoxifying herbs and spices. Delicate frangipani flowers and fragrant oils envelop you in blissful calmness.

ELE | NA, an acronym for the Elements of Nature, taps into the elemental energies for a healing spa experience. From traditional massages to a fully equipped hair and beauty salon – there's something for everyone, be it families, couples, solo travellers, or millennials.

### 1. Creative Community Spa Xperience

How about a fun spa afternoon with your pals? Something refreshingly different? Try the community spa at ELE | NA – it is unlike anything else in the Maldives.

Woven around the elements of nature, every experience connects you with the tropical landscape and community at Ailafushi island. Learn about holistic wellness and sustainable spa practices in small groups.

Your 100% sustainable, nature-inspired spa journey unfolds in a beautiful garden.

- Discover your element - Wood, Fire, Earth, Metal, or Water. Based on your element, a spa journey will be built for you.
- Calm yourself with sound therapy. Choose from a Tibetan singing bowl, a Tibetan singing bowl with water or sand, and a hypnotic drum rhythm (Boduberu drumming).
- Natural elixirs are mixed, pound and whipped using three fresh and organic components, tailored to your element.
- Lie back on the community garden spa beds and let its certified therapists massage you into a state of blissful relaxation. Treatment options include natural facial, natural face and neck lifting treatment, back, neck and shoulder massage, scalp and hair booster, and floating feet.
- Complete the experience with a sustainable beverage from the Xperience Juice Bike.



This curated spa journey connects all five senses, leaving you re-energised and refreshed.

### 2. Authentic Maldivian Xperience

If you're keen on experiencing the local culture – then its indigenous spa therapies are a must-try! ELE | NA weaves island healing traditions into the spa experience. Inspired by the age-old knowledge of Dhivehi Beys (traditional healers), the brand has created signature rituals: Kaashi Naashi Therapy (Coconut Shell Massage), Veli Bon'Dli (Maldivian Sand Bundle Massage), and Bileh Holistic (Betel Leaf Massage).

### 3. Tranquil Ocean View Xperience

Tropical gardens, ethereal Indian Ocean views, and airy interiors in earthy hues invite you to linger in the spa complex. Calm the senses whilst cleansing the soul. The Tranquility Spa Zone includes an outdoor hot tub, a

sauna, a steam room, a relaxation lounge, and refreshments. Enjoy complimentary use of these facilities on booking a spa treatment.

### 4. Nourishing Medi Spa Xperience

Get a radiant glow while holidaying in the Maldives – ELE | NA's dedicated medical spa therapist will design the best approach to healing your skin. Test your skin's hydration level and find noticeable improvement after a medi spa therapy session. Leave Ailafushi feeling and looking fabulous.

### 5. Fun Juice Bike Xperience

Your Instagrammable moment! First in the Maldives, there are two juice bikes parked in the spa garden loaded with colourful treasures: papaya, pineapple, watermelon, lemon, muskmelons, dragon fruit, and grapefruit. Blend your favourite tropical fruits and enjoy the refreshing beverage in the fruit shells. An all-natural experience!

# Embracing its Maldivian Roots, Alila Kothaifaru Maldives Introduces The Art of Coconut Experience

Alila Maldives sees themselves as artisans and its guests as globetrotters who have a profound appetite for life that drives them to discover and engage themselves with the world, transcending all borders.

These discerning global travellers appreciate the natural environment and the exclusivity of a luxury retreat developed in harmony with the destination. They indulge in the moment, pursuing authentic experiences and relationships. Not content to remain observers, they want to participate, to fully engage in all the facets of a destination, to feel connected, to be enriched...and surprised. At Alila Kothaifaru Maldives, the latest Alila Experience, 'The Art of Coconut', is crafted to immerse guests in a unique cultural, artistic and culinary journey to understand why the coconut tree is revered as the Miracle Tree in the Maldives.

In this experience, its local Leisure Concierge host will share Maldivian stories about the coconut tree that show how every aspect of it is used, whether in food,

to create art or make coir ropes. Guests can watch how the locals climb the coconut trees in the traditional way, and enjoy coconut water sipped fresh from the fruit. Little ones can also join in the fun by learning how to make beautiful artistic creations using a coconut palm.

Next, guests can have a go at making some traditional Maldivian dishes, to be enjoyed afterwards overlooking the gentle waves. This is followed by a mixology class at Mirus Bar to learn a few simple tips that can elevate cocktail-making skills using coconut as a base. A must-try here is the 'Mirus Bar Coconut Aged Negroni', which is aged inside a hollowed-out coconut for three days, infusing the cocktail with a strong coconut flavour without overpowering the original taste of Negroni.

Coconut is well-known for its health and beauty benefits. So, a tropical coconut and flower bath followed by a massage and mini facial is the perfect way to bring this journey to a close, leaving guests feeling totally relaxed and revitalised.

"Besides providing an unforgettable experience for guests to get to know the roots of Maldivian culture, The Art of Coconut also aligns with Alila's zero-waste commitment, where every part of a coconut tree can be useful and not contribute to landfill waste. For instance, we use soil made from coconut waste for all planting activities on the island," said Alexandre Glauser, General Manager, Alila Kothaifaru Maldives.

The Art of Coconut is one of the resort's Cultural Learning experiences, focused on a love for exploring local history, culture and artisanship. The destination is at the heart of The Alila Experience and guests are invited to enhance their holiday with lifestyle activities tailored to individual interests across five themes which, in addition to Cultural Learning, include Active Spirits (outdoor sporting pursuits),



Conscious Living (wellness and environs), Couple Celebration (for indulgence together), and Culinary Arts (cooking classes and gourmet explorations). Visit <https://bit.ly/3xviejl> to learn more about Alila Experience activities.

### Stay Longer, Save More

Book your blissful Maldives holiday and indulge yourself for longer and save more at Alila Kothaifaru Maldives. Stay a minimum of three nights and receive a complimentary fourth night along with daily breakfast and more. The offer is valid until September 30, 2022. visit <https://www.alilahotels.com/kothaifaru-maldives/offers/stay-longer-save-more> to book.



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## IN A NUTSHELL

## Angsana Velavaru Introduces 'Live Well, Travel Well' Campaign for its 28th Anniversary

Angsana Velavaru commences 'Live Well, Travel Well' campaign in celebration of its 28th anniversary.

It aims to inspire guests to pursue whatever that brings them joy. The resort offers 33% off its best available rates for those who book their stays before October 4, 2022.

Angsana Velavaru is a perfect island destination playground – offering a variety of 5 All-Inclusive Packages, designed to cater for different characters of holiday makers. From

gourmet foodies to family travellers, spa lovers, novice and experienced divers, Angsana's All-Inclusive Concept introduces a new style of intrepid travel in the Maldives for you to experience the very best of #AngsanaMoments during your holiday.

Seize the moment and plunge into the uplifting world of Angsana Velavaru, the perfect destination playground for a sensational year-round tropical escape!



## Top 10 Tips from Outrigger Maldives Maafushivaru Resort on Viewing Manta Rays



Top 10 Tips from Outrigger Maldives Maafushivaru Resort on Viewing Manta Rays Ahead of World Manta Day on September 17, Lynn Jula Kessler, the marine biologist at Outrigger Maldives Maafushivaru Resort offers the following advice on viewing the gentle giants.

### 1. When to go?

The manta rays' migration pattern is dominated by the two monsoon seasons in the Maldives. From roughly December to May, mantas are found more frequently on the Western atolls. From June to November, search is focused on the eastern sites. In South Ari Atoll around Outrigger Maldives Maafushivaru Resort, year-round sightings of manta rays are recorded, as the animal don't leave the atoll when the monsoon is changing (due to the geographical size of the atoll). Most manta sightings have been recorded between October and March.

### 2. Videos and books to enjoy in preparation

The Manta Trust has published a fantastic Guide to Manta and Devil Rays, which gives a great overview of all the manta species known to science, with helpful identification keys. For a more aesthetic book, recommend the Secret Life of Manta

Rays, co-authored by Dr. Guy Stevens, the founder of Manta Trust. This book has stunning photographs and interesting insights to the conservation efforts, plus it's a beautiful coffee table book. As one of the biggest threats to manta ray populations around the world is overfishing, Seaspiracy on Netflix is good to familiarise yourself with overexploitation of the seas.

### 3. Choose a resort with a dedicated marine biologist or conservationist

Many resorts in the Maldives have a resident marine biologist or conservationist on site. With a bit of research, or by contacting the resort directly, you can find out how well the marine biologist is included in the resort's ocean activities – and what other types of sustainability efforts are being pursued by the resort. At Outrigger, they have their global nature conservation programme called OZONE – Outrigger ZONE.

### 4. Do a trial snorkel or scuba dive first

This is important, especially if you are not a strong swimmer or have little experience snorkelling in the ocean. Try snorkelling in a safe environment first. This way you can familiarise yourself with the equipment,

practice being in open water, and increase the chance of a more enjoyable manta dive or snorkel excursion.

### 5. Be ready!

If you join a group trip make sure you listen to your guide's instructions and are ready to get into the water at any moment!

### 6. Don't get too close

Manta rays are very curious by nature. We try to stay at about a three to four metre radius. But due to mantas' inquisitive nature they almost always break this distance themselves. The best advice to give when it comes to manta ray encounters is to stay as calm as possible. The chances of the manta ray turning around and checking you out from up close are much higher when you remain calm at the surface rather than splashing around and chasing after it. However, don't try to touch a manta ray. This will most likely end the encounter as mantas are not tactile animals and get scared when being touched.

### 7. Photography tip

Many times, guests are seen more focused on their camera settings than on the mantas themselves. If you are not familiar with your camera settings or you don't want the extra pressure of having to take pictures as well as keeping up with mantas, leave the camera behind. However, action cameras such as GoPros are usually a very easy solution and make great footage and can be rented at the dive centre. If you join a trip with me you can be certain that I always carry a camera. I am more than happy to share my pictures.

### 8. Instagram channels to keep an eye on

If you are interested in manta rays, I



recommend the channels from Manta Trust (@mantatrust) and the Maldivian Manta Ray Project (@maldianmantaproject). On the OZONE Maafushivaru (@ozone\_maafushivaru) channel, I share information and insights on manta rays as well as other marine projects at Outrigger Maldives Maafushivaru Resort.

### 9. What is Outrigger Maldives Maafushivaru Resort doing on Manta Ray Day?

For World Manta Day we have a scheduled manta ray excursion for our guests. I will be joining as well, providing the participants with insights into the manta rays' life and briefing everyone on proper in-water behaviour. All data collected during this trip will be submitted to the Maldivian Manta Ray Project and the Manta Trust, which is the world's leading organisation on manta ray research and conservation.

### 10. Learn more about mantas and the responsible resort approach

Find out more about World Manta Day at WorldMantaDay.com. It's a great resource with information links, a list of challenges facing mantas, upcoming events, and how to get involved. The Outrigger OZONE page also gives useful insights on coral protection and propagation initiatives, reducing waste, guest education, and the best eco-activities for responsible travellers.

# Diana Vergara Appointed New Resident Marine Biologist at Vakkaru Maldives



Timeless sanctuary Vakkaru Maldives Resort has appointed Diana Vergara as the new resident marine biologist to enhance guest experiences and the private island's marine biology programmes. Diana's

role includes raising environmental awareness among guests and researching and monitoring the house reef and the coral around the island. She will also lead snorkelling excursions and give informational lectures on conservation for adults.

Speaking about her new role, Diana said: "My goal at Vakkaru is to communicate, create awareness and share my passion with others and make them fall in love with this amazing underwater world. I'm so glad to be part of the team and look forward to working together to protect our ocean and nature, especially in the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve Baa Atoll. We will implement more marine education and activities for all guests, including kids. Even from simple steps, I always say, 'every seed counts'."

Growing up near the ocean, Diana had a passion for all animals, especially the marine types such as orcas, whales, turtles and sharks. Curious to know more about the behaviour of these animals and how humans could help preserve our biodiversity, she studied marine biology, getting a Master's degree in Marine Biology and Coastal Environments from the Universidade Federal Fluminense (UFF),

Brazil. The Colombian national is also an experienced scuba diver certified as an Open Water PADI and Project AWARE instructor. In addition, she is also getting certified as an instructor in Enriched Air Diver, Deep Diver, Digital Underwater Photographer, Wreck Diver, and Fish ID.

"For the past seven years, I've been working in marine biology, performing ecosystem monitoring (coral reefs, mangroves and seagrass), analysis of the benthic community, invasive species, coral gardening and photo identification of some marine animals in Colombia, Brazil and Maldives," says Diana, who has worked at several resorts in the Maldives.

"As our new resident marine biologist, Diana will play a big role in enhancing our guest experiences through a variety of programmes that raise awareness about the oceans and the need for their conservation," said Iain McCormack, General Manager, Vakkaru Maldives.

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## MOVERS &amp; SHAKERS

## Sun Siyam Iru Veli, Maldives Announces Key Leadership Appointments with Ali Adam as New General Manager and Victor Zanotti as Executive Chef

Sun Siyam Iru Veli, Maldives welcomes fantastic new additions to its management team by appointing Ali Adam – as new General Manager, and Victor Zanotti as Executive Chef.

Ali Adam, who is native Maldivian, brings a wealth of experience to Sun Siyam Iru Veli, having worked in some of the most successful resorts and fantastic brands in the Maldives, such as Dhigufaru, Vilamendhoo, Mirihi, and Vakaru Island Resorts. He also held the position as Roaming General Manager for Crown & Champa Resorts overlooking the likes of Komandoo, Kuredu, Meeru, Veligandu, and Vilamendu Island Resorts.

Ali has spent the last 20 years holding managerial positions in the Maldives and comes with an overall experience of more than 24 years within the tourism & hospitality industries, displaying exemplary work ethics, and an exceptional attention to detail.

Originally from Peru, but raised in Italy, Executive Chef Victor Zanotti started his journey with some of the most exceptional dining establishments in his hometown while gathering culinary skills and experience during his time traveling the world on cruise ships. Chef Victor left Italy as Head Chef at the celebrated Elisir restaurant and made his debut in the Maldives as the



**Victor Zanotti**  
Executive Chef

Italian Specialty Chef at Vakkaru Maldives. He then moved to Cocoon Maldives as Executive Chef, before



**Ali Adam**  
New General Manager

being headhunted by Raffles Maldives where he was appointed the Italian Specialty Chef, in addition to Head Chef.

## Villa Hotels & Resorts Appoints Hassan Shifau as Director of Human Resources at Paradise Island Resort



Villa Hotels & Resorts has announced the appointment of Hassan Shifau as Director of Human Resources at Paradise Island Resort & Spa in the Maldives. In alignment with the Villa Hotels & Resorts transformative journey, Hassan Shifau will support

the brand to deliver outstanding hospitality and enhance the overall guest experience, which the group is known to showcase.

Prior to joining the Paradise Island Resort team, Shifau held the position

of Human Resources Manager at Gili Lankanfushi Resort. With an impressive hospitality career spanning over 13 years working in the luxury tourism industry, he has previously worked with leading Maldives resorts including Cheval Blanc Randheli, St. Regis and One & Only Reethi Rah, which is where he started his hospitality journey.

“I am thrilled to join the Villa Hotels & Resorts team, especially during such an exciting stage in the brand's transformative journey. I am passionate about local brands and supporting local talent and it is exciting to have the opportunity to contribute my knowledge and

experience to one of the Maldives pioneering local companies.” said Hassan Shifau.

Providing invaluable knowledge from his extensive experience, Shifau will lead the Paradise Island's Human Resources team to enhance the brand's commitment in building a progressive, dynamic and a vibrant culture. He will also be cultivating a strong team with diverse talents and warm authentic hospitality delivered from the heart.

He will also be actively engaged in the brand's sustainability initiatives and driving participation for awareness campaigns at the resort to preserve and protect the natural environment.

## Crown & Champa Resorts Appoints Mohamed Solah as Chief Operating Officer

Leading local hospitality company, Crown & Champa Resorts (CCR) has appointed Mohamed Solah as the new Chief Operating Officer of the business.

Solah joins CCR from his previous position as Cluster General Manager of Zaya Hospitality in Dubai. He is one

of the few Maldivians to have worked as a General Manager out of Maldives.

Solah acquired a wealth of experience within Crown & Champa Resorts, where he started his career in 2002 and has worked at most of the Crown's properties and was appointed as General Manager of Komandoo Resort

in 2018 at the age of 25, youngest General Manager to have ever been appointed in Maldives.

Solah also gained extensive experience during his time abroad, most notably at Hilton Seychelles Northolme Resort & Spa and Zaya Hospitality.



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# DEEP PASSION

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

with

**Shafraz Naeem**

Ocean 6|50

Dive Instructor / Tek Dive Speaker

“Diving and being underwater, whether it's in the ocean, a lake or an abandoned flooded mine, it is where I find my own solace and my own element”

In this edition of the Islandchief, we sat with Shafraz Naeem from the Ocean Six Fifty Foundation to listen to his deep passion below the ocean. We watched his videos where he made his way down ramps, as the light of the day faded. He continued to make his way deeper and deeper, until he picks his jaw up from the floor to see a giant manta ray gliding above him. He smiles and tells us whether it's in the ocean, a lake or an abandoned flooded mine, it is where he finds his solace and his own element.



With the team of support divers who made it possible for Shaff to achieve 50 hours underwater

**Please introduce yourself to the readers, about how you ventured into diving and became a full-fledged certified divemaster and instructor trainer?**

I have always been interested in the underwater world ever since I was a child. My dad had a few books by Captain Jacques Cousteau and that was when I first saw photos of sharks and other marine life and became curious. Then I saw an episode of "Secrets of the Sea" by Captain Cousteau that was shown on TVM and that got me hooked.

Soon after my Secondary education in 1994, I was drafted to join the Maldives National Defence Force (MNDF). I was working with the Coast Guard when I was shifted to the specialized Dive Unit in the military. I trained and completed my PADI Divemaster course and filled the roles of Navy Clearance Diver and Military Dive Instructor over 14 years. I became a PADI Instructor in 2003 and managed the dive centre at Ranveli Resort for a while and then from 2005 to the end of 2007 I managed the dive centre at Dive Bandos Island Resort. And in 2011, I crossed over to SSI and became an Instructor Trainer. While I was in the military, I trained the Coast Guard divers, Marine Corp divers and the Special Forces in diving as well.

**What significance does diving hold for you with how long you have been involved in the act?**

I did my first dive in 1988-1989 in Alimatha Maldives Resort and after that I have been diving since 1993. Diving and being underwater, whether it's in the ocean, a lake or an abandoned flooded mine, it is where I find my own solace and my own element. Whenever I feel stressed or need to be on my own, I go for a dive. It means everything to me. There was a time in my life that I could not even sleep without diving!

**As a recognized underwater photographer, you have taken some of the most captivating shots underwater. How did your interest begin in the field and what was your initial aim in documenting the marine organisms and what was your biggest achievement?**

My interest began while I was with the dive unit in MNDF. We used to document the search and recovery dives and it sparked my interest to explore further in marine photography. When I first started taking underwater photos, I used film cameras. I got into digital underwater photography in 2004. Today besides diving, I have been fortunate to showcase some of my underwater

photography internationally and in local publications. I also had the opportunity to work with cinematography teams globally.

I have been proud to achieve the awards for First and Second in Underwater category and Best of Show; in the photography contest held by the Maldives Tourism Promotion Board in 2007.

**In 2021, you established the first 50hrs underwater dive, to advocate and raise awareness for sustainable solutions to marine environment-related issues such as plastic pollution, climate change and threatened/endangered species. What impact did this have on your life and what was the community response to the initiative?**

The 50-hour dive has taught me a lot of things, especially about people. The dive was mentally very challenging and exhausting, but I managed to do it. And I had a good team of support divers who helped me achieve it. Since then, the news about that dive made it to many international dive media, it's amazing to see how much support I have received from divers around the world.

**You have been a VIP speaker at the Tek Dive Conference held in Singapore, several times. In your skillset as a professional diver, how important is diversity for Tek Diving which is not very common in the Maldives?**

Yes, I have been invited almost every year to speak at the Tek Dive Conference at ADEX Singapore since 2016. It's a great honor to be included amongst the best technical divers in the world.

Technical diving has got a lot of scope in the Maldives. I have been doing these extreme deep dives since 2000 in the Maldives when I was part of the MNDF Dive Unit. There are so many deep cave systems across the Maldives and only a few have been explored. And Maldives needs to allow technical deep diving, so more and more people can do it.

**Having explored deep cave systems of the Maldives and around the world, with even more to discover, can you recommend any good dive sites/destinations from your experiences?**

For me, since I love diving deeper than 30 or 40m, my favorite dive sites now are in Vaavu atoll and in Huvadhoo. And also, the mines in Finland; which are very cold and require special training to be able to dive those. I would love to take Maldivian divers to Finland and do

some cave/mine dives with me one day. Plura cave in Norway and the caves in Florida and Mexico are currently on my bucket list.

**Who is your go-to dive buddy?**

There are quite a few of them to be honest. My go-to dive buddies are my wife, Michelle, then close friends Azim Musthaq and world-renowned technical diver Ben Reymenants. Then there are a few of my buddies from the MNDF Dive Unit who I used to always dive with back in the day.

**What is your most memorable dive encounter and craziest thing you've seen underwater?**

I love all marine life. So far, the most memorable marine life encounter has to be being in the water with a Humpback Whale and her calf. The craziest things I have seen underwater would be on the search and recovery dives that I used to do in the military. It's best not to mention what they were.

**What is your pre-dive ritual like, in preparing for a long deep dive? Any favorite dive snacks before/after a dive?**

If I'm doing a long deep dive, I always do a workout or a run the night before the dive and mentally prepare myself. Sometimes, I just listen to music and read. I have a power bar or a protein bar before the dive. And after a dive, it's usually a cup of coffee and a sandwich.

**What's your proudest diving achievement and what are your future goals involving the emerging divers of the Maldives?**

I guess the highlight would be to achieve the 50-hour dive as there were so many people in the dive industry who were looking forward to seeing me fail. Other than that, being recognized amongst a team of extreme divers from around the world.

**What can we expect next from you? Are there any projects or initiatives you have planned that we should keep an eye out for?**

Well, I have got a book in the pipeline, and we are in the process of finishing the setup of the Ocean Six Fifty Foundation to help make the underprivileged youth of Maldives achieve their dreams of becoming dive professionals, and create awareness about the fragile marine environment we have in Maldives. Then there's the podcast that I'm starting soon. And maybe another extreme dive event might happen as well. Who knows!

**What would be your message to the young divers and others in the industry who wish to build a career in the Maldives?**

The dive industry in Maldives is growing at a rapid pace. There will always be a need for divemaster's or instructors. It will be an advantage to learn and be fluent in a language other than English as well. Don't do the courses one after the other. Dive as much as you can, get the experience, slowly continue with the courses. Don't become a zero to hero dive professional in 6 months!



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NEW OPENINGS

# Brand New Hotel, Clarks Exotica Opens in Kamadhoo Island



A brand new hotel, Clarks Exotica, opened at Kamadhoo Island on September 6, 2022.

Nestled in the UNESCO-protected biosphere of Baa Atoll, this tropical Island overlooking the Indian Ocean is famous as a yoga retreat destination which is surrounded by the most beautiful beach with white sand all over amidst crystal clear blue water. The island gives you the natural element which you have been seeking for. Whether you like to kick back, relax and take in the magnificent, stunning beauty of the island and surrounding reef, the island offers the

perfect balance of both.

Discover and explore the marine life and lose all sense of time as you venture beneath the ocean's surface to glide alongside turtles and whale sharks-enjoy scuba diving, snorkelling to see a coral garden in a huge fish structure made by the locals here. Hop on to a boat ride and swim with the Gigantic Manta rays at Hanifaru Bay. Go for morning or night fishing. Take a picnic basket to a remote sandbank or visit a local island and as you come back from your adventurous and tiring day and enjoy sumptuous round-the-clock menus and relish the

traditional taste of Indian, Maldivian and Continental food at its restaurants.

Clarks Exotica provides excellent rooms and accommodations including rooms with immaculate views of the ocean. A total of 19 rooms, it features Deluxe Sea View rooms, Executive Sea View with Balcony rooms, and Penthouse with Terrace & 360 Degree View of Ocean. All of the accommodations are laced with modern amenities and facilities to ensure your stay is convenient and delightful.

Clarks Exotica has two exclusive restaurants that offer the best food in

town. The Bridge, its multi-cuisine restaurant, has a diverse menu with delicacies borrowed from a variety of cuisines. Pool Deck Lounge, the lounge area by the outdoor pool, is the perfect place to kick back and relax with a refreshing drink.

With a 45-min flight from Velana International Airport to Kamadhoo, the destination gives travellers a holiday that strikes the perfect balance between bliss and adventure. From Male (MLE) to Dharavandhoo via Domestic Flight it takes 30 minutes, which is followed by a 15-minute speedboat ride to Kamadhoo.

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# South Asian Travel Awards 2022 Concluded Successfully at Adaaran Select Hudhuran Fushi



The 6th edition of South Asian Travel Awards (SATA) 2022 held at Adaaran Select Hudhuran Fushi on September 29 - 30 has been successfully concluded.

SATA is endorsed by over 16 regional and international bodies for its accredited work. Biggest hotelier brands in the travel, tourism and hospitality industry from Maldives, Sri Lanka, India, Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh participates annually in the event.

Vice President Faisal Naseem participated in the event as the chief guest of the SATA 2022 along with Minister of Tourism Dr. Abdulla Mausoom and other government officials in addition to several hoteliers and entrepreneurs in the Maldives and in South Asia.

Speaking at the event, Vice President, Faisal Naseem thanked the organizers of SATA and stated that since its launch in 2016, it has become a

unique platform celebrating the finest in South Asian hospitality. He stated that the six South Asian countries represented in the SATA Awards have the best to offer in the world.

The Vice President highlighted how the tourism industry began in the Maldives 50 years ago. He stated that it was the hard work, dedication, and sacrifice of a few young pioneers who, against all odds, overcame many challenges and introduced tourism to the country.

Key partners of SATA included Al Shaali Marine Maldives as Platinum Partner, Gold Partner – Velana International Airport, Gold Partner – The Hawks Pvt Ltd, Destination Partner - Maldives, supported by Maldives Marketing & Public Relations Corporation (MMPRC), Official Host – Adaaran Resorts, Digital Partner – Ooredoo Maldives and Insurance Partner – Allied Insurance Company of the Maldives.



Leading Liveboard Brand - Voyages Maldives



Leading Tourist Transport Provider - Jalboot Marine Services



Leading Dive Resort - Adaaran Select Meedhupparu Resort



Leading Hospitality Development Company - Marriott Bonvoy South Asia, India (South)



Leading Yacht Marina Hotel Resort - Crossroads Maldives

## EVENTS &amp; AWARDS

# Tourism Golden Year Gala Recognizes Contributors to the Success of Maldives' Tourism Over the Last 50 Years



During the gala, the President conferred 'The President's Tourism Gold Awards' to 77 individuals, including the Speaker of the Parliament, Former President Mohamed Nasheed and Vice President Faisal Naseem, who had done outstanding work to promote the country's tourism sector over the last 50 years. The President was also presented with a commemorative plaque by the Minister of Tourism, Dr Abdulla Mausoom.

In his speech, the President reflected on the lessons derived from having a well-established tourism industry for 50 long years. He stated that anything was possible with perseverance, hard work, and determination, and he encouraged the younger generation of Maldivians to consider developing brand new industries that would benefit the country.

President Solih expressed his heartfelt gratitude to all those involved in promoting the country's tourism sector, including resort owners and operators, guesthouse operators, those who run safari vessels and dive centres, as well as travel agents, performing artists, and all tourism sector employees, and credited their efforts with the country's economic success. He stated that the rest of the world now recognises that the Maldives caters to all types of tourists, from luxury resorts to medium-sized businesses.

On the 50th anniversary of tourism in the Maldives, the Ministry of Tourism held the Tourism Golden Year Gala, concluding the Golden Jubilee celebrations and recognizing the contributors to the success of Maldives tourism with the President's Tourism Gold Awards.

Speaking at the gala held at Kurumba Maldives, President Ibrahim Solih stated that a valuable lesson learned over the last 50 years since tourism began in the Maldives was the importance of maintaining a cordial relationship with the private sector, especially in industries related to national development.

The award was also presented to individuals in various sectors related to Maldives tourism including private businesses, domestic and international airlines and telecommunications services providers. First Lady Fazna Ahmed, Vice President Faisal Naseem, prominent government officials, tourism industry pioneers, and leaders of the tourism sector attended the event.

The President's Tourism Gold Awards aims to recognize the services of individuals and establishments that have contributed to the development of the nation's tourism industry over the years.

# Embudu Village and Summer Island Maldives, Wins Culinary Awards at FHAM 2022

Chefs at Embudu Village and Summer Island Maldives have won multiple prizes at the prestigious Food and Hospitality Asia (FHAM) International Culinary Challenge & Exhibition, which recently took place in Hulhumale'.

The FHAM International Culinary Challenge, endorsed by the World Association of Chefs Societies, is widely recognized as the region's premier international culinary competition.

Chefs at Embudu won three bronze prizes, and two merit prizes. The winners are as follows:

- Damindu Lakmal Withana** - Bronze  
- Seafood Hot cooking category
- Damindu Lakmal Withana** - Bronze  
- Team Event - Hot Cooking / Dessert Category
- B.P Tharindu Shehan Prabashwara**  
- Bronze - Team Event  
- Hot Cooking / Dessert Category
- K.A.W Akila Madusanka** - Merit  
- Beef Hot Cooking

**R.A.Kasun Thilkarathna** - Merit  
- Petits Fours or Pralines Category

Chefs at Summer Island won gold, silver, bronze and merit awards:

- Thobas Arulnathan** - Gold  
- Beef Hot Cooking
- G.W.Dinesh Madusanka** - Silver  
- Beef Hot cooking
- Mohan Kannaiyan** - Bronze  
- Beef Hot cooking
- Sanjewa Thushara Peiris Halielle Gedara** - Merit  
- Creative Bread Display
- Sujit Adikary** - Merit  
- Seafood Hot cooking
- MD Kamrul Hasan** - Merit  
- Maldivian Finger food platter
- Mohamed Faneez** - Merit  
- Modern Maldivian Meal
- Mohan Kannaiyan** - Merit  
- Lamb Hot cooking

The FHAM International Culinary Challenge & Exhibition is one of the Maldives tourism industry's most prestigious annual events, and aims to



connect tourism professionals from around the world, as well as exhibiting all that Maldivian hospitality has to offer.

Embudu Village is located in South Male' Atoll, a 20-minute speedboat ride from Male'. The natural, barefoot resort offers relaxing stays in beachfront bungalows or water villas. Famed for its good food, it is popular amongst tourists and Maldivians alike.

Summer Island Maldives, located in North Male' Atoll, a 45-minute speedboat ride from the airport, is an award-winning barefoot,



eco-conscious resort with an infinity pool overlooking the Indian Ocean, two restaurants, beachside and overwater bars, and a choice of numerous beach villas, as well as water villas.

Commenting on the awards, Ramsay Perera, General Manager at Kaimoo Resorts and Hotels at Embudu Village, said: "These awards are recognition of the quality of the chefs and the food they offer at our resorts. Good food is such an important part of any holiday, and I am delighted for our chefs for showing what they can do."

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## IN THE NEWS

## Neyvaa 2 – Breaking the Freediving World Record in the Maldives

Freediving, also known as apnea, consists of submerging underwater without the assistance of an external air source, and has an ancient heritage in the Maldives Islands. For thousands of years, freediving was used for gathering food and other resources such as pearls, sponges, and corals from hidden beneath the waves. Long before scuba diving, free divers were challenging their ability to dive deeper to obtain treasures from the ocean depths. Permitting a deep connection to the ocean, many Maldivians learnt the techniques of freediving from a young age growing up in the islands. Today, freediving is not only about the depth, duration, and technique but also about mindset, health, wellbeing, learning and challenging the body.

As the pioneering freediving instructor and PADI freedive professional training centre in the Maldives, Freedive Maldives (freedivemv) is set to execute the second Neyvaa event which will take place on October 1, 2022. Neyvaa, translates to breath in the local Dhivehi language. The Neyvaa 2 event will attempt to set a new Guinness World record for the most people performing static apnea simultaneously. The Maldives clear tranquil waters are an idyllic locale for this record-breaking event. Freedive Maldives plan to have approximately 500 people performing static apnea in the warm waters of Male' Atoll with the official Guinness World record judges present to appraise the spectacular and first of its kind event.

The first Neyvaa event was initially held on World Tourism Day on October 1, 2019 and successfully broke the Guinness World Record for the highest number of freedivers diving together simultaneously with a total of 521 participants. The event was also participated by President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih, Cabinet Ministers, Parliament Members and World Champion Freediver William Trubridge and Jonathan Chong. This record



marked the sole world record held by the Maldives in the field of sports.

Freediving has certainly reached new depths in the Maldives with the upcoming Neyvaa 2 event anticipated to highlight the Maldives on the map for freedivers worldwide. The multi-location event is targeted for resorts and resort colleagues. While talking with Freedive Maldives owner and the first Maldivian freedive instructor, Fahd Faiz, he explains more about the sport and the upcoming Neyvaa 2 event.

“The goal is for the freediver to be at one with the water. Relaxation is one of the most important aspects. You need to completely relax and sink into a meditative state. There are no tricks or magic breathing techniques. To advance in freediving, you need to get completely out of your comfort zone,” said Fahd Faiz, Freedive Maldives.

To prepare for the upcoming Neyvaa 2 event and to offer freediving in the resorts, Villa Hotels & Resorts arranged for all dive instructors to be trained by Freedive Maldives.

The training took place across all of the Maldives properties, commencing at Royal Island Resort & Spa, located in the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve of Baa Atoll, an idyllic location to practice freediving in the various protected dive sites around the atoll. The training started with learning the theory of freediving, equalization, visualization and stretching. Combining all these techniques allows one to become a successful freediver.

“The Neyvaa 2 event aims to ignite the passion for freediving in the Maldives and worldwide and bring the highest number of divers together to perform static apnea simultaneously. The incredible thing is, you don't need to be an athlete to enjoy freediving because the sport is more about mind-set and technique.” said Fahd Faiz, Freedive Maldives.

To experience the underwater wonderland in its purest form is a feeling like no other and in addition to all Villa Hotels & Resorts dive instructors becoming certified to teach, they will also prepare to take place in the record breaking Neyvaa 2 event alongside other resort colleagues.

## JOALI Maldives Supports Ungoofaaruu School to Enhance Educational Facilities

JOALI Maldives opens a Reading Park and Special Education Needs (SEN) classroom at Ungoofaaruu School to enhance the school's educational facilities. Since their opening in 2018, JOALI Maldives, the first art-immersive luxury resort in the Maldives, has worked with a passion and dedication to support local communities across Raa Atoll.

JOALI Maldives donated USD 20,000 to Ungoofaaruu School to finance the project. This included building one of the largest Reading Parks in Maldives, inclusive of a Brain Gym. The Brain Gym is a space to teach students games such as puzzle, chess, scrabble, and Rubik's Cube to stimulate their brains. A new SEN classroom was also built, with the aim to create an inclusive learning space for children with disabilities. The project was built in a sustainable manner, to ensure there was minimum disruption to the environment and for the longevity of the project.

On opening the facilities, General Manager of JOALI Maldives, Enver Arslan highlighted the importance of education to build the future generations. “Supporting

education and capacity building is vital for community development – and is one of our key focus areas. We will continue to partner with local institutions and organizations, and collectively work to educate and inspire the future generations.”

Earlier this year, JOALI Maldives donated classroom materials to the two schools in Raa Ungoofaaruu; Ungoofaaruu School and Saif Preschool. The resort also does regular school visits, teaching students about the hospitality sector and about marine life and sustainability.

The resort prides itself in promoting education and inspiring the future generations of Raa Atoll. In May-June 2022, the resort participated in Raa Tourism Expo 2022, Culinary Arts Exhibition in Raa Meedhoo and Water Sports Exhibition in Raa Hulhudhuffaaruu to showcase the incredible talents of their Hosts and inspire students and young people from across Raa Atoll to potential opportunities in the hospitality sector. In January 2022, the resort also donated to Women in Tech Maldives to teach coding skills to 30+ girls in Raa Atoll School in Raa Dhuvafaru.



In June this year, JOALI Maldives donated USD 30,000 and two eight-seater buggies worth \$ USD 14,900 to the Raa Dhuvafaru Council to support the community.

IN THE NEWS

# Marriott International Maldives Launches Live Fully Activation in Collaboration with Maldives National University



Marriott International Maldives in collaboration with Maldives National University recently launched an activation to become employer of choice in Maldives – LIVE FULLY. The objective of this collaboration is to nurture and create the future talent pipeline for Leadership roles within Marriott International Maldives focused on the local talents. The key aim of this event was to highlight growth opportunities and career adventure for the young minds within Marriott International. It aimed to inspire students to reflect on their career journeys, what it means to live fully with Marriott International, and how to take the next step in growing their career to who they want to become within the company.

Live Fully is an external-facing extension of Marriott's TakeCare Culture, showcasing the different TakeCare Pillars – (Opportunity, Community and Purpose) and how they come to life at Marriott International. Whether an individual is seeking to grow with new opportunities, work beside teammates that feel like family, or make a difference, TakeCare culture helps the associates to live life to its fullest.

Emma Jones, was aspirational about Marriott Culture and the growth opportunities it has for the young and creative students of MNU. She did mention that the company provides a world of opportunities and helps each associate to grow and develop professionally and personally by developing meaningful and supportive relationships at the workplace. The theme of this activation showcases Marriott International's commitment towards its associate growth and how it invests in associates to allow them to Live Fully, and Grow Forward.

The event began with a Panel discussion between the Faculty of Hospitality and Tourism studies, Maldives National University led by Ms. Zeenath Solih and Marriott International representatives. The idea was to seek common collaborative grounds to attract, train and retain the local talent graduating from MNU. Marriott International representatives were positive about this collaboration considering the growth of their resorts in Maldives.

The next was an interactive and engaging session

between the students and Marriott International team. Around 50 students from MNU participated in this event. The focus was on presenting the amazing growth opportunities to the students offered by the seven resorts.

The event focused on Marriott Internship – Hotel Internship Program offered by Marriott International to the students. It is a highly structured and planned program spanned over a period of 06 months, providing on job exposure in all Operations and Support departments and presenting an opportunity to work and learn alongside the hospitality experts in Maldives.

The next segment was about Voyage – Global Leadership Development Program spanned over a period of 18 months to help create the future leaders. Voyage helps build on the current strengths of high potential students providing them continuous guidance and learning opportunities thereby creating a Talent pool of future Supervisory and Mid Management level leaders. Currently this program is offered by The Ritz-Carlton Maldives, Fari Islands and Le Méridien Maldives Resort and Spa. In the coming years, all resorts look forward to host the Voyage Program. All seven resorts also provided direct hiring opportunities for the students present for the event.

Along with the growth opportunities, the discussion was focused on Marriott's Take Care culture and the various benefits of personal growth Marriott International has to offer, highlighting how the company places an importance on associate growth, and that there are structured trainings to help them become who they want to be.

Marriott International representatives truly wish to keep this momentum alive and collaborate on many such development opportunities with Maldives National University.

# MTCC Partners with Al Shaali Marine Maldives to Manufacture and Supply Additional Ferries

MTCC has contracted Al Shaali Marine Maldives Private Limited to manufacture and supply the additional ferries required for the implementation of the Phase 2 and 3 of Raajje Transport Link Ferry Service carried under the "Integrated National Public Ferry Network Project". During a se, CEO Adam Azim signed on behalf of MTCC and Chairman Abdulla Hussain Mohammed Al Shaali, signed on behalf of Al Shaali Marine Maldives Private Limited.

Al Shaali Marine Maldives Private Limited, a leading manufacturer of speed ferries globally will manufacture and supply 65 ferry vessels to MTCC as part of the terms of the agreement. The ferries will be designed with 50 comfortable seating arrangements and air-conditioned cabin along with special arrangements to cater people with special

needs (PWD). In this regard, the ferries will have PWD accessible toilets, access ramp for easy access, spaces for stretcher and wheelchair.

The Phase 1 of the Integrated National Public Ferry Network Project, which is currently in operation at Ha, Hdh, and Sh. Atolls, as well as the implementation of Phases 2 and 3 to the remaining 17 atolls, will connect all islands in the Maldives through a reliable and convenient RTL ferry network, helping to bring socio-economic prosperity to the Maldives at large.

As the country's largest public transport service provider our objective is to provide a safe, affordable, convenient, and reliable land and sea transportation service for the Nation.



BON APPÉTIT

# Kashi Keyo Foa

(Screwpine Fruit, Coconut, Rice Flour, Jasmine Water)



*“Foa is an occasional dish prepare in the northern part of the Maldives. The main ingredient is Kashikeyo (screwpine fruit). This is a really delicious pudding dessert, enhanced with jasmine flavour”.*

Chef Ishag started his professional career at Full Moon Beach Resort in 1999 as commis, and he moved several other places where his experience benefited him in reaching greater heights. Over the 22 years he had overseas training at Bangkok and Huawa Hin and Bangkok, Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, Japan and Germany, in these training he build his capacity and became Executive Chef in 3 different resorts in Maldives and worked in a senior level in five star resorts in Maldives. Chef Ishaq has achieved numerous award in his related area. Chef Ishag is WACS approve Continental Judge, who is the 1st Maldivian who got approve since the year 2021.

## INGREDIENTS

- Gabulhi (semi ripped coconut), grated and finely crushed
- Thinly Sliced kashi keyo (screwpine fruit)
- Sugar
- Rice flour
- Jasmine water
- Rampe leaf
- Water
- Chopped crew pine nuts

## METHODS

1. In a sauce pan boil the screw pine, ramapa leaf and cinnamon together until the screw pine slices gets soft and the water evaporates.

2. In sauce pan roast rice flour, add grated young coconut and sugar. Stir until the water evaporated and create a paste.

3. Add the screwpine mix, screwpine nuts and cook to combine.

4. Add the jasmine water a mix, cook another 5 minutes in low heat to create a hard paste. Take a tablespoon full paste and make around ball.

5. Serve as finger food in a special occasion.



Courtesy of  
Executive Chef  
Ishag Solih  
Royal Island Resort & Spa



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# Frankly Speaking

**MMPRC and the tourism sector's efforts to increase the inflow of tourists may result in additional flights coming in and new market openings. Then again, is there any positive impact without a new terminal at Velana International Airport or direct flights to regional international airports such as Maamigili, Maafaru, Gan or Hanimaadhoo? What is your take?**



**Fawzan Faried**  
Country Manager - Maldives  
SriLankan Airlines

*It is very encouraging to see MMPRC and Tourism stakeholders promoting the destination individually or collectively. With many countries slowly moving out of COVID guidelines, it is expected that tourist distribution too will get divided among many countries. It is a huge challenge for Maldives as the brand has already gone into the minds of the global tourism sector, sustaining the mindset will have to be done through continuous brand marketing.*

*While the efforts are being established by the stakeholders to sustain the Maldives share, it is important that the promise of an up end product is delivered, including external elements such as state of the art CIP lounge facility, TMA new terminal is being inaugurated. However the key is tackling the congestion on arrival and at departure of Velana. When a guest pays for a premium holiday, nobody wants an unpleasant arrival or even tiring departure after a good holiday. With the gradual build up of Japan and South Korea arrivals and expected China border opening, operations at Velana are not going to get any better. With the very slow progress of the new terminal, the opening year might keep getting pushed. Expansion at the current terminal is limited. This situation surely requires highest priority attention as no airline or resort doesn't want to deliver substandard service to their guests.*

*It is best that all stakeholders put their efforts and minds to think out of the box. Situation should be looked at in a broader perspective. The Government of Maldives has spent considerable amounts of money to develop regional airports readily available for usage. If it happens, certainly the premium product which the destination is marketing will have some value addition. Once the stakeholders fix the convenient transfers from the regional airports to the resorts, I'm confident that more airlines will consider operating direct flights to those smaller locations!*



**Ahmed Afrah**  
Managing Director  
Canopus Maldives

*As Maldives aims for 2 million tourist arrivals in the coming year, it is increasingly crucial for the government to ramp up the work to complete the Velana International Airport (VIA). With the current forecasted arrival figure of 1.6 million for this year, the bottleneck created by VIA is evident. A solution to this which the government already seems to be doing is to encourage more international flights to have direct flights to other international airports in the country. However, many obstacles exist for this and the best solution still remains to complete VIA as soon as possible.*



**Ahmed Zubair Adam**  
Managing Director  
Blue Horizon Pvt Ltd

*I would suggest having a working committee composed of tourism sector's NGOs, airport companies, domestic airlines and government chaired by the Planning Minister who is involved in designing the airports to find practical solutions!*



**Abdulla Nasheed**  
President  
National Hotels & Guesthouse  
Association of Maldives

*Direct flights to regional International Airports will boost the benefits of tourism to the local community, providing a sustainable income to the residents.*



**Shaaz Waleed**  
Managing Director  
Resort Life Travel

*Despite the development of several international airports in the Maldives, the congestion at VIA will only be minimized with national carriers directly flying to regional locations of Maldives.*



**Ahmed Arshad**  
Director  
Avia Maldives

*Without a proper terminal at VIA, I believe even if we manage to secure more tourists or charter flights into the country, there may be less positive outcomes. As the gateway is a very key part of the experience guests will have in the Maldives.*

*Rather than focusing on a single entry point to the country it's high time we also try to distribute traffic to these outstation airports, Maafaru is one of the highest potential airports for jets or upmarket charters. Maamigili can be used to cater additional traffic as well and Gan should be given priority as this is an airport with high potential; should we have a good domestic transportation network.*

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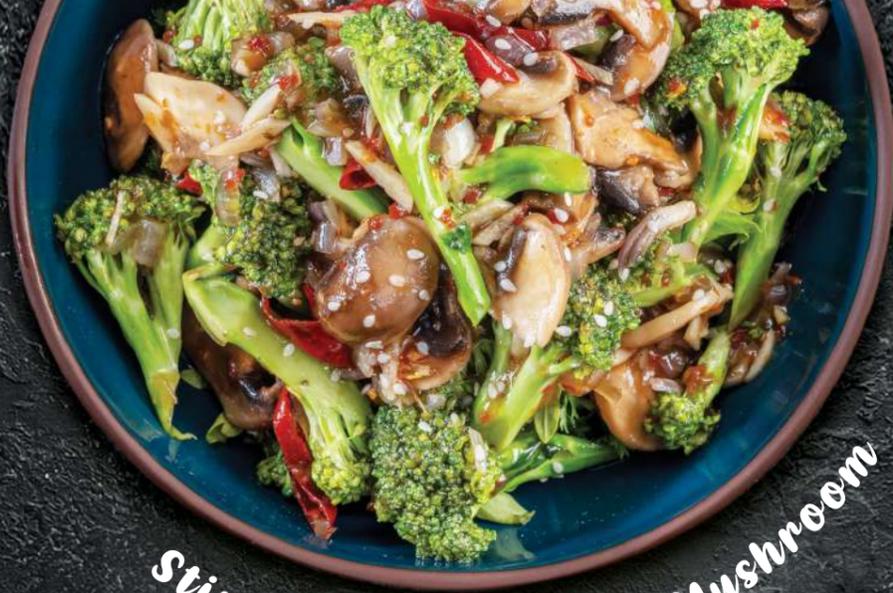
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