

# The islandchief

travel news

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with

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Dear Readers,

As we say goodbye to the chill of winter and welcome the warmth of spring, The islandchief is excited to embark on a new journey with you. This edition marks a long-awaited return to exploring the world, and we couldn't be more thrilled!

We also take a look at the prestigious 2024 ITB Berlin fair, the leading global event for the travel and tourism industry, taking place from March 5 to March 7 this year. Held annually since 1966, the ITB Berlin fair is the world's leading travel trade show. This year's fair will see the participation of over 10,000 exhibitors from 180 countries worldwide, with Maldives contributing a delegation of 247 individuals from 106 companies.

We also proudly celebrate the 2024 International Women's Day, a worldwide tribute to women's accomplishments, challenges, and ongoing efforts for gender equality. This year's theme is 'Invest in Women: Accelerate Progress', with the campaign theme being 'Inspire Inclusion'. These themes aim to inspire people to acknowledge the importance of women's inclusion and promote progress towards gender equality. In this issue, we feature Ms. Azma Abdullah, the driving force behind Sunland Journeys' success as its Executive Vice President. With over 30 years of experience in the aviation industry, Azma began her career at Air Maldives, where she developed her passion for customer service and gained invaluable expertise in reservations and ticketing. Her story is an inspiration to professionals seeking advancement, embodying the qualities of dedication, perseverance, and a steadfast commitment to excellence.

In the Bon Appétit section on Page 22, we highlight Chef Madusanka, the Head Chef at Islander's Grill. He presents his recipe for Maldivian Fish Curry, a dish deeply rooted in the Maldivian culinary tradition. This iconic curry includes a sea bream head and vegetables, cooked in a spicy sauce that mirrors the multicultural essence of the Maldives. Chef Madusanka's creation at Sun Siyam Iru Fushi is influenced by the resort's dedication to sustainability and cultural conservation, demonstrated through their collaboration with local fishing communities.

Finally, in the "Frankly Speaking" segment on Page 23, industry experts offer their perspectives on empowering and supporting women as they enter and advance in male-dominated industries. They discuss strategies and insights to help women navigate challenges and capitalize on opportunities in these traditionally male-dominated fields.

We are also eagerly looking forward to the return of the 5th Annual Vacations Expo in Maldives – after a four-year hiatus and since the pandemic – scheduled from 25-27 April at Central Park, Hulhumale. This three-day event promises to showcase a wide range of travel services for Maldivians and expatriates, aiming to promote and advance the country's travel and tourism sector.

Until next time,

**The Islandchief Team**



## Koagannu Cemetery

Koagannu Cemetery, situated in Addu City, Maldives, is a historically significant site, believed to be the oldest cemetery in the country, dating back 900 years. Located in the northern edge of Meedhoo district, it stands as a testament to the architectural prowess of ancient Meedhoo residents. The cemetery was constructed by Chief Justice Mohamed Shamsuddeen and his sons after their exile from Male' during the reign of Uteem Sultan Shuja'i Mohamed Imaduddine I, circa 1660. Meedho is one of the oldest populated wards in Addu Atoll, with roots tracing back to the original Indo-Aryan settlers. The island has a rich history of Islamic influence, with the first mosque in the Maldives established there by an Arab traveler named Yoosuf Naib in the 12th century.

**Photo Credit:** World Maonuments Fund

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# Beond Takes Flight with Apple Vision Pro, Offering First-Class Inflight Entertainment



Beond, the world’s first premium leisure airline, is taking inflight entertainment to new heights by offering Apple’s groundbreaking Apple Vision Pro to select passengers starting in July 2024.

**An Immersive Maldivian Experience**  
This industry-first initiative will allow Beond passengers to enjoy unparalleled entertainment options alongside captivating glimpses of the Maldives. Beond’s extensive library of movies,

games, and other content will be further enhanced by stunning visuals showcasing the best of the Maldivian archipelago.

**Building Anticipation for Paradise**  
“The Apple Vision Pro will transform the inflight entertainment experience,” stated Beond Chairman and CEO Tero Taskila. “We are thrilled to be the first airline to offer this innovative technology to our passengers.” Beond is collaborating with Maldivian partners to curate breathtaking footage that will not only entertain but also build anticipation for passengers’ arrival in paradise.

**Elevating the Travel Experience**  
Offering the Apple Vision Pro aligns with Beond’s commitment to providing a premium travel experience from start to finish. This initiative comes alongside

the airline’s recent milestones, including the acquisition of its second aircraft and the successful launch of commercial passenger services in 2023.

**Expansion on the Horizon**  
Beond is poised for further growth, with planned route expansions from Milan, Dubai, and Bangkok to the Maldives in mid-2024. All flights will feature luxurious all-lay-flat seating configurations, ensuring a comfortable and enjoyable journey for every passenger.

Beond’s embrace of cutting-edge technology and dedication to exceptional service solidify its position as a leader in premium leisure travel. With the Apple Vision Pro on board, passengers can look forward to an unparalleled inflight experience that sets the stage for an unforgettable Maldivian adventure.

# Direct Flights from Fujian Boost Maldives Tourism, Marking China’s Growing Importance



Maldives celebrated the inaugural direct flight from Fujian Province, China, to the Maldives. A special ceremony took place on February 14, at Velana International Airport, marking the arrival of Xiamen Airlines flight MF8017 with tourists from Fujian Province to the Maldives.

The tourists were welcomed with a lively traditional BoduBeru performance and offered a special gift pack, which included flowers. Among the dignitaries present were H.E Ambassador Wang Lixin, the Ambassador of the People’s Republic of China to the Maldives, along with representatives from the Ministry of Tourism, Maldives

Airports Company Limited (MACL), Maldives Immigration, Maldives Customs Service, and various other government entities and tourism associations in the Maldives.

China has consistently been a pivotal market for the Maldives tourism industry. The reinstatement of direct flights from China to the Maldives on January 18, 2023, greatly bolstered tourist numbers last year, with over 187,125 visitors from China exploring the Maldives, cementing its status as one of the top three source markets. Notably, on January 19 of this year, we celebrated the first direct flight from Hong Kong to the Maldives since 2020,



contributing significantly to the surge in Chinese visitors to our destination. Furthermore, the Maldives achieved a remarkable milestone of the highest number of tourist arrivals in a single day on February 12, 2024. This surge in arrivals is largely attributed to the increasing number of tourists from China, reaffirming its position as the leading source market for the Maldives.

The commencement of direct flights from Fujian Province to the Maldives, coupled with focused marketing efforts in the Chinese market, will undoubtedly have a positive impact on the Maldives’ tourism industry and

strengthen its position as the preferred destination for Chinese travelers.





ACROSS THE SKIES

# Manta Air Operates First International Flight from Bangalore to Dhaalu Aiport

Manta Air has commenced direct flights between Bangalore, India and Dhaalu Atoll, Male'. On February 16, Friday, Manta Air's flight MAV4411 landed at Dhaalu Airport.

Allowing visitors to avoid the hassles and additional expense of transiting through the main Velana International Airport, the new direct route provides access to many luxury resorts located in Dhaalu atoll.

Mohamed Khaleel, CEO of Manta Air previously said, "With Manta Air's expansion through a new direct flight route from India to the Maldives we anticipate a surge in travel interest and bookings from Indian tourists. This strategic move aims to enhance the guest experience and boost bookings for resorts in Dhaalu atoll, particularly Kandima, RIU Hotel, and Niyama Private Island, which are all located in close proximity to the airport."



As a leading seaplane and domestic airline operator, Manta Air, prides itself on providing its passengers with a seamless travel experience and exceptional customer service. By

flying directly to Dhaalu airport, visitors to resorts located in that atoll are able to save on the usual transit time and additional transfer costs incurred when entering Maldives

through Male' airport route.

Manta Air is set to further create special packages along with top resorts in the atoll. These packages

make travel easier for Indian visitors with seamless connections and exclusive deals. Development of local island tourism is also expected to boost with the new milestone of Manta Air.

# Hanimaadhoo International Airport Expands Operations with New Apron



Hanimaadhoo International Airport has inaugurated a new apron, enhancing its operational capacity. The apron was completed independently of the

ongoing airport development project, which is funded by a loan from India's Exim Bank and includes a new runway and modern terminal.

The Regional Airports Company Limited (RACL), which manages the airport, has shifted operations from the old apron to the newly

constructed facility. The new runway received its inaugural flight from national carrier Maldivian on Sunday morning.

RACL Managing Director Ahmed Mubeen explained that the apron was a strategic addition initiated by President Mohammed Muizzu to boost revenue generation. According to RACL, the 42,000-square-foot apron will be promoted as a jet parking facility, accommodating up to six jets simultaneously. Upon completion of the larger development project, the apron will function as an isolation bay.

The ongoing Hanimaadhoo airport development project aims to enable the airport to handle larger aircraft such as A320s and Boeing 737s, increase passenger capacity to 1.3 million annually, and provide fuel storage facilities.



# INTRODUCING ASTRABON’S RAMADAN PROMOTION – THE BIGGEST YET



Embark on a culinary journey with Astrabon, your go-to destination for premium kitchenware and F&B accessories in the Maldives. Established in 2002 by Yoosuf Riffath, CEO of Capital Travel & Tours, Astrabon has over 20 years of experience in delivering high-class finery to the Maldivian community.

Our commitment to excellence is evident in our extensive range sourced from top manufacturers worldwide. From renowned European brands like Pujadas, Vicrilla, and Arvan to Australian brands such as Bartuff, we bring you the best in kitchenware from across the globe.

Astrabon products are not just beautiful; they're certified in ISO and NFS, adhering to international health and hygiene standards. Trusted by 95% of the country's tourist accommodations, our immaculate collection in hotel ware ensures a touch of luxury in every setting.

Earning recognition as a prominent industry leader in the Maldives, Astrabon has expanded its product range to encompass the entire HoReCa sector, including room appliances, housekeeping essentials, buffet ware, and catering to diverse needs, from restaurants to airports, caf  s, and bakeries. Notably, our commitment to excellence has led us to introduce additional services, including air conditioning and washing machines from IFB Industries, as well as top-tier coffee machines and wide variety of capsules from Caffitaly.

Throughout its history, Astrabon has cultivated unwavering loyalty among household consumers. In keeping with our commitment to excellence, we extend a special invitation this year, encouraging even more individuals to participate in our exclusive Ramadan offerings.

Hence, this Ramadan, join us in celebrating the spirit of giving with Astrabon's exclusive Ramadan Promotion:

- 1. Storewide 10% Discount  
Savour a generous 10% discount storewide, tailored for both HoReCA and household clientele. Elevate your culinary experience with the pinnacle of quality that Astrabon offers.
- 2. Sets of Distinction: 20% Discount  
Elevate your dining experience with an exclusive 20% discount on any purchase of tableware, including glassware, in sets of 12 pieces.
- 3. Ramadan Bundles: Unveiling Unprecedented Discounts  
Astrabon is excited to introduce 8 practical bundle options for the first time. From essential kitchenware to reliable sets, these bundles are crafted for maximum utility. Discover quality without compromise.
- 4. Lucky Draw  
Every purchase surpassing MVR 3000 automatically qualifies you for our Lucky Draw. Stand a chance to win enticing prizes, adding an extra layer of excitement to your Ramadan shopping experience with Astrabon.

At Astrabon, our dedicated staff strive to make your shopping experience seamless. Enjoy the durability of our products, backed by a 1-year warranty for our entire customer base. For HoReCA, we offer convenient credit facilities to meet your business needs.

Visit our store or shop online to experience the elegance of Astrabon's kitchenware and F&B accessories. May this Ramadan be filled with joy, blessings, and exceptional culinary delights!



**20% Discount**  
**For Sets of 12+**



## Lucky Draw

Every purchase surpassing **MVR 3000** automatically qualifies you for our Lucky Draw.

Stand a chance to win enticing prizes, adding an extra layer of excitement to your Ramadan shopping experience with Astrabon.

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## IN A NUTSHELL

## Revel in the Magic of Easter with Your Loved Ones at Niyama Private Islands Maldives

Niyama Private Islands Maldives invites guests to immerse themselves in the enchantment of Easter within the tropical paradise of the Maldives. With glorious temperatures, azure skies, and serene waters, the stage is set for a memorable holiday experience.

The resort's dining venues are primed to delight guests with tempting menus, including a lavish Easter Brunch boasting ocean views tailored to accommodate both regular and Orthodox Easter celebrations. For younger visitors, an array of exciting activities awaits, from egg hunts to visits from the Easter bunny, ensuring fun-filled family moments. Meanwhile, adults can indulge in luxurious spa treatments or find serenity through morning yoga sessions and invigorating outdoor workouts.

The twin islands of "Chill" and "Play," with their crystalline sands, tranquil lagoons, and coral atolls, provide idyllic settings to bid farewell to winter and

embrace the promise of summer days ahead. Whether seeking adrenaline-fueled adventures or peaceful solitude, guests can discover new passions and rejuvenate amidst the natural splendour.

Dubbed "Nature's Playground," Niyama continues its tradition of celebrating Easter with flair, offering a diverse range of activities catering to all ages and preferences. From delectable seasonal feasts to rejuvenating therapies at Drift by Niyama, complemented by celebrity practitioners, there's something for everyone. Additionally, an Easter Cocktail on the Beach beckons guests to Dune Beach, where they can enjoy canapés, cocktails, and captivating performances by resident DJs and dynamic dancers.

For those craving an authentic culinary experience, Took Took Street Food on the Beach presents Asian delicacies paired with DJ-spun beats and exquisite Sake selections. Meanwhile, Easter Sunday



promises delightful pursuits, from egg hunts to family-friendly games, ensuring joyous moments for all. The festivities culminate in a Sparkling Springtime Brunch at poolside Epicure, featuring a sumptuous spread of global cuisines complemented by live music and a relaxed ambience. Orthodox Easter celebrations continue with Epicure's Sunday Dinner, showcasing a rotisserie

and live stations offering Georgian favourites such as khinkali and khachapuri.

As day turns to night, families are invited to partake in the Hip & Hoppening Family Fun Games—a merry extravaganza brimming with laughter and cheer, ensuring lasting memories for all who attend.

## Unwind in Paradise: Sun Siyam Olhuveli, Your Ultimate Retreat for Entertainment and Relaxation



Sun Siyam Olhuveli Maldives has embarked on a new concept to redefine the resort experience, aiming to hold more entertainment-related events to captivate both locals and tourists. With its recent Valentine's event, Paradise Pulse, the resort showcased its commitment to becoming a premier entertainment destination in the south Male Atoll, offering guests an unforgettable fusion of love, music, and luxury.

On February 14, 2024, Sun Siyam Olhuveli welcomed guests to an enchanting night filled with love and entertainment. Paradise Pulse, the inaugural event of the year, exceeded all expectations, setting

the stage for an electrifying experience that left attendees in awe.

The festivities commenced with a vibrant cocktail party against the backdrop of breathtaking ocean views. Guests mingled and savored refreshing drinks while being serenaded by the soulful tunes of acclaimed Finnish saxophonist, Jetro, whose performances set the perfect tone for the evening.

As the sun dipped below the horizon, guests were treated to a romantic dinner set on the pristine beach. Culinary delights curated by the Sun Siyam Olhuveli F&B & events team tantalized the senses, offering a delectable feast under

the stars, enhancing the romantic ambience of the night.

However, the true highlight of Paradise Pulse was the stellar lineup of world-class entertainment. Renowned artists MatildaG, Shébani, DJ Jeremiah, and DJ Toni took the stage, captivating the audience with their dynamic performances. Their music reverberated through the night, igniting the dance floor and infusing the atmosphere with infectious energy.

Paradise Pulse attracted a diverse crowd, including locals, esteemed guests from local media, and in-house guests, all united in their pursuit of love and entertainment. The seamless coordination and impeccable service provided by the Sun Siyam Olhuveli team

ensured that every aspect of the event was executed flawlessly, leaving a lasting impression on all who attended.

As the night concluded, it became evident that Paradise Pulse was more than just an event—it was a celebration of life's greatest pleasures, a testament to the resort's commitment to offering unparalleled experiences to its guests.

Looking ahead, Sun Siyam Olhuveli is poised to host many more exciting events, each promising to elevate the entertainment offerings and redefine luxury in the Maldives. Whether it's a romantic getaway, a celebration of love, or simply a desire to unwind in paradise, Sun Siyam Olhuveli invites guests to embark on a journey of unforgettable moments and endless possibilities.





IN A NUTSHELL

# Chef Jeffrey Vella Presents Mediterraneo: A Culinary Extravaganza at Taj Exotica Resort & Spa, Maldives



Taj Exotica Resort & Spa, Maldives, played host to a remarkable culinary event Sunday evening, "Mediterraneo," curated by renowned Chef Jeffrey Vella. The evening featured an exquisite selection of dishes, meticulously prepared to harmonize flavors and transport diners to a realm of gastronomic delight, inspired by the stunning Maldivian scenery and the diverse tastes of the Mediterranean. Hailing from Malta and born into a family



of hoteliers, Chef Jeffrey Vella has always been driven by a deep passion for hospitality. Throughout his career, he has honed his skills working alongside culinary giants such as Gordon Ramsay, Alain Ducasse, and Jean Christophe Novelli. Chef Vella's illustrious journey has taken him to renowned establishments worldwide, and he currently holds the esteemed position of Corporate Culinary Director at the



renowned restaurant Cap Aureo, located in the enchanting city of Rovinj, Croatia.

The menu, a culinary masterpiece, was designed to delight both meat lovers and vegetarians alike.

Among the delectable offerings were:

**Snacks:** Cauliflower Petals with Yeast and Homemade Mozzarella, Watermelon Carpaccio with Sea Weed Dust, Pizza Ai Funghi.

**Starter:** Risotto, Classically Done, Simmered Tomatoes, Mozzarella Water.

**Main Course:** Pumpkin and Jerusalem Artichokes; A Roasted Pumpkin Seed Praline, Confit of Jerusalem Artichokes and Paste, Black Garlic, Thyme Oil OR, Mahi-Mahi; Milanese of Mahi – Mahi Brown Crab Butter and Capers OR, Corn Fed Chicken; Morel and Truffle Layered Breast, Mushroom Ketchup, Chicken Juices, Pressed Potato Terrine.

**Dessert:** A Bitter Love; Guanaja Bitters and Berries.

Mediterraneo seamlessly blended centuries-old culinary traditions with a modern touch, creating an unforgettable experience that transcended the ordinary. The ambiance, characterized by earthy tones and warm textures, was designed to immerse diners in nature, enhancing the sensory experience of each dish. Infused with the renowned hospitality of The Taj, every moment of Mediterraneo exuded warmth, comfort, and a genuine commitment to providing guests with the finest culinary experiences.



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## MOVERS &amp; SHAKERS

## Ali Ashfag Serves as the Front Office Manager at Seaside Finolhu in Baa Atoll, Maldives

Introducing Ali Ashfag, the front office Manager at Seaside Finolhu in Baa Atoll, Maldives, possessing over a decade of extensive industry knowledge, commencing his career as a waiter at 18, Ashfag transitioned to the front office eight years ago, beginning his journey as a butler.

From crafting exceptional experiences to upholding impeccable service standards, Ashfag consistently excels in his role. He firmly embraces the idea that leadership is a continuous journey, envisioning his future self in a decade as his guiding role model. Demonstrating steadfast commitment to principles of integrity, discipline, and humility, he embodies the same qualities he has had the privilege to collaborate with throughout his distinguished career in the industry.

Upon joining the seaside Finolhu Maldives, he instigated transformative initiatives that raised the establishment of unprecedented levels of excellence. Notably, Ashfag introduced Upon joining Seaside Finolhu Maldives, he instigated transformative initiatives that raised our establishment to unprecedented levels of excellence. Notably, Ashfag introduced the innovative concept of personalized butler service, reshaping standards and establishing new benchmarks for luxury and guest satisfaction.

Ashfag led a thorough recruitment effort, carefully selecting and training individuals who now embody



the essence of butler service, referred to as "roohu" in the distinctive parlance of Finolhu. His commitment to developing a highly skilled team has resulted in the Front Office becoming one of the most efficient and functional departments on the island. Recognizing his exceptional performance, Ashfag was promoted to Front Office Manager in October following a meticulously crafted development plan.

Ashfag's educational accomplishments encompass earning a degree from Cornell University and achieving a Master Certificate in Hospitality Management and Hotel Revenue Management. This distinctive blend of practical experience and academic prowess establishes him as an outstanding leader, highlighting not just his youth but also his notable expertise and achievements in the hospitality sector.

## Zakwan Ahmed Joins Kuda Villingili Resort Maldives as the Director of Sales



Kuda Villingili Resort Maldives, the five-star luxury resort in North Male' Atoll has announced the newest

addition to its sales leadership team, Zakwan Ahmed, who joined as the Director of Sales. Zakwan brings with

him over fifteen years of extensive experience and expertise in the Maldivian hospitality industry.

As a Director of Sales, Zakwan will play a pivotal role in overseeing sales operations, managing relationships with key partners and travel agencies, negotiating contracts, and collaborating with various teams to ensure successful sales outcomes. Furthermore, he will be working on developing strategies to achieve sales targets for Kuda Villingili. His primary focus will be the German-speaking countries, Europe, and the UK market.

Prior to joining Kuda Villingili Resort, Zakwan held the role of Assistant Director of Sales at THE OZEN COLLECTION, where he not only showcased exceptional leadership but also acted as a brand representative at industry events, trade shows, and

sales missions. His extensive experience includes representing various resorts in prominent locations across Europe, including Berlin, Tyrol, Neuschwanstein, Cannes, and more. Zakwan's presence at international events allowed him to connect with partners on their home turf, providing valuable insights into market nuances. This firsthand knowledge has been instrumental in developing more effective sales strategies, a skill set he brings to Kuda Villingili Resort.

Commenting on the appointment, Amjad Thaufeeg, Commercial Director of Kuda Villingili Maldives, said, "Zakwan will add tremendous value to our leadership team, aligning his expertise with our dedication to providing exceptional experiences to guests. We look forward to his contributions as we continue to elevate our resort to new heights."



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## MOVERS &amp; SHAKERS

## Oaga Art Resort Appoints New Island Chief and Resort Manager

Oaga Art Resort announces the promotion of two key members of its team: Samee Saeed has been appointed Island Chief Katheeb, and Nazim Mohamed, known as Naadhu, has been named Resort Manager.



**Samee Saeed**, a seasoned hospitality professional with over 18 years of experience, brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise to his new role as Island Chief Katheeb. Having previously served as Resort Manager at Oaga, Samee possesses a deep understanding of the resort's operations and brand values. In his new position, he will be responsible for overseeing a wide range of projects, from planning and organizing to directing and managing, ensuring they align with the Board of Directors' vision and contribute to the resort's continued success. His strategic approach, coupled with strong communication skills, will be instrumental in leading various resort areas and curating experiences that elevate the guest journey.



**Nazim Mohamed (Naadhu)**, with over 20 years of experience in the hospitality industry, takes on the crucial role of Resort Manager. Naadhu has steadily climbed the ranks since his start as a Guest Relations Officer, demonstrating dedication and leadership qualities. His diverse experience, encompassing roles like Front Office Manager at various Maldivian resorts, equips him with an understanding of resort operations and guest service excellence. As Resort Manager, Naadhu will be responsible for planning, organizing, directing, and managing all resort operations, ensuring they deliver the exceptional Oaga guest experience while maximizing profitability and fostering employee engagement.

## Sun Siyam Resorts, Welcomes Erika Magora as Cluster Assistant Pr & Communications Manager for Sun Siyam Iru Veli & Sun Siyam Vilu Reef Maldives



Sun Siyam Resorts is pleased to announce a dynamic addition to its PR and Communications team with the appointment of Erika Magora as Cluster Assistant PR & Communications Manager for Sun Siyam Iru Veli and Sun Siyam Vilu Reef. With an impressive background in law from the UK, coupled with a diverse upbringing in the Philippines and Malaysia, Erika brings a unique blend of skills and experiences to our renowned luxury resorts.

Prior to joining Sun Siyam Resorts, Erika served as the key figure in managing Marketing Communications at the prestigious 5-star luxury resort, The Datai Langkawi in Malaysia. Her collaboration with international media, partners, and agencies has significantly contributed to the resort's global presence. She has worked with top journalists, production crews and PR partners from the UK, Europe, Australia, America, and Asian regions. Erika also has experience in sales and marketing when she played a pivotal role in the Asia Pacific region's sales and marketing for Foodpanda, a leading delivery brand in Asia.

"I cherish the cultural diversity and distinctions of both properties that I work for. Sun Siyam Iru Veli fascinates me as it revels in its private luxury tranquility, attracting a premium market. In Sun Siyam Vilu Reef, the naturally playful environment and genuine warmth of the people create an inviting haven for repeating guests. Both are beautiful, each in its unique way. Embracing diverse media and markets adds excitement to my work. The pristine beach and sea in both places energize me, fueling my passion for what I do." expressed, Erika.

Claudia Klingbeil, Group Director of PR & Communications at Sun Siyam Resorts said: "Erika's appointment underscores our dedication to assembling a team of talented individuals who not only possess exceptional professional capabilities but also embody the diverse cultural tapestry that defines our global clientele. We are confident that Erika's passion for communication, coupled with her international perspective, will elevate our PR and Communications efforts to new heights of success."





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# CHARTING NEW HORIZONS



In this issue of the Islandchief, we bring you Ms. Azma Abdullah, the driving force behind Sunland Journeys' success as its Executive Vice President. With a remarkable career spanning over 30 years in the aviation industry, Azma began her journey at Air Maldives, where she cultivated her passion for customer service and gained invaluable expertise in reservations and ticketing. Today, her leadership at Sunland Journeys has been characterized by a relentless pursuit of excellence, as she strives to elevate customer service standards, embrace technological innovations, and overcome challenges such as those posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Her narrative is an inspiration to professionals seeking progress and development, embodying the qualities of dedication, perseverance, and a steadfast commitment to excellence.

“Real career growth comes from consistent effort and dedication, rather than looking for quick solutions. It's a journey that requires patience, perseverance, and a strong sense of purpose.”

## EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

with

**AZMA ABDULLAH**

Executive Vice President  
Sunland Journeys

**How did your formative experiences within the aviation industry shape your passion for a career in this field, and how does that background inform your approach to elevating customer service standards at Sunland Journeys?**  
My journey in aviation began straight out of school, a typical young person unsure of their path. Now, after 30 years, I'm amazed by how far I've come. Joining Air Maldives was a dream fulfilled, especially for my mother who had hoped for it. The airline's uniform was iconic, and getting selected amidst tough competition was a thrill. Working in aviation quickly became enthralling. The daily

interactions with customers and the technical aspects of reservations and ticketing were captivating. At that time, Air Maldives managed reservations for all airlines, including Singapore Airlines, where I had the privilege of serving. Training with these airlines, especially learning Singapore Airlines' unique service culture, was unforgettable. Issuing my first ticket to a customer brought immense joy. Meeting and even surpassing customers' travel expectations became a profound source of happiness and fulfillment.

In 1999, I embarked on a new chapter, joining Sunland Travel when they took over passenger sales for Singapore Airlines. It's been an incredible journey, and I'm thankful for every opportunity. **In an era marked by technological advancements and accessible travel routes, the appetite for international exploration among Maldivians is burgeoning. How has Sunland Journeys evolved to cater to the evolving preferences and expectations of outbound travelers?** In the past, communication with customers mainly involved emails, phone calls, or visits to ticketing offices.



However, with today's technology, we have many ways to stay in touch with our customers. Sunland Journeys has embraced this change by connecting with our clients through various digital platforms that are now part of everyday life. Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter have become essential for staying connected with our clientele.

As travel trends have changed, so has our approach at Sunland Journeys. Initially, we offered customized hotel packages for a limited range of destinations based on customer preferences. Today, our services have expanded to include not just hotels, but also transfers, visa assistance, sightseeing tours, and a full range of travel solutions tailored to the needs of an increasing number of leisure travelers. Embracing technology has allowed us to offer a more comprehensive and personalized travel experience to our valued customers.

**Could you recount a particularly formidable challenge you confronted during your tenure at Sunland Journeys and elucidate on the strategies you employed to surmount it?**

Like many in the travel industry, we were greatly impacted by the effects of COVID-19. As managers for about six airlines, the sudden halt in flights left numerous passengers stranded in the Maldives, unable to return home. This posed a massive challenge for us. The pandemic brought unprecedented difficulties, including job losses and isolation. Despite these challenges, Sunland Journeys persevered.

We collaborated with airlines and authorities to organize repatriation flights, ensuring the safe return of stranded passengers. Transitioning to remote work had its own challenges, but our team worked tirelessly during the lockdown, overcoming personal difficulties. We provided updates on the situation and government regulations to our customers and partners globally. I want to give a special thanks to Ms. Martha for her leadership during this crisis, providing courage and motivation to the team.

This period tested our resilience, but we remained committed to supporting those affected, both locally and internationally.

**What concrete measures have you instituted to ensure that Sunland Journeys consistently delivers unparalleled customer service experiences, particularly in the dynamic realm of travel and tourism?**

Our team consists of experienced professionals who undergo continuous training, including specialized programs offered by renowned airlines. This ensures that we remain up-to-date with industry trends and can meet the diverse needs of our customers.

Understanding that each traveler is unique, we focus on tailoring our services to suit individual preferences. Our aim is to offer a wide range of options and provide attentive, personalized assistance throughout the journey.

We also prioritize building strong relationships with our business partners and customers, as trust and reliability are fundamental to how we operate. Feedback from our customers is highly valued, as it helps us improve our services based on their experiences and suggestions.

Through these proactive efforts, we are committed to delivering outstanding customer service, making Sunland Journeys the preferred choice for all travel and tourism needs.

**Reflecting on your extensive tenure exceeding two decades with Sunland Journeys, what key factors have fueled your unwavering dedication to the company, and how do you envisage the trajectory of your role in the years ahead?**

One of the main reasons I've stayed committed to this job for over two decades is the unwavering support and

opportunities for personal and professional growth that Sunland Journeys has provided. The trust and confidence they have consistently shown in me have been crucial in shaping who I am today. After working at Sunland Journeys for so long, the organization truly feels like a second family to me.

I am incredibly excited and grateful for the amazing opportunities I have been given, and I want to sincerely thank the entire management team at Sunland Journeys.

During my time with the company, I have had the privilege of taking on various roles and responsibilities, each of which has expanded my knowledge and skills in invaluable ways. As I now lead the company, my ultimate goal is to lead it to new heights while overcoming any challenges that may arise. I am confident that, with our experienced team, we will not only overcome obstacles but also ensure that the business continues to thrive in the future.



**Sunland Journeys has cultivated partnerships with a multitude of esteemed resorts and guesthouses in the Maldives. How do these strategic alliances enrich the overall client experience offered by Sunland Journeys?**

These partnerships allow us to offer our clients a wide range of accommodation options tailored to their preferences, budget, and travel needs. Whether it's a peaceful beachfront resort or a cozy guesthouse in a local community, our diverse portfolio ensures that we can meet a variety of traveler preferences.

Moreover, our collaborations with these esteemed properties enable us to provide exclusive deals, special packages, and unique experiences, enhancing the value for our clients. By building strong relationships with these establishments, we can offer personalized recommendations, insider knowledge, and seamless booking experiences, ultimately enriching our clients' overall journey and stay in the Maldives.

Additionally, these strategic alliances help us facilitate smoother and more efficient coordination for our clients, offering a comprehensive experience that goes beyond just booking flights and accommodations. Through these partnerships, we provide a holistic and tailored approach to ensure that our customers have a memorable and fulfilling experience during their time in the Maldives.

These partnerships are also a crucial part of our commitment to delivering exceptional and personalized service, allowing us to create unforgettable and customized experiences for each of our customers.

**With a focus on personalized packages tailored to "Discover the Maldives and Explore the World," how does Sunland Journeys adeptly customize its offerings to cater to the diverse preferences and needs of travelers?**

We recognize that each traveler is unique, and we pride ourselves on creating personalized experiences to suit individual needs. Whether you're a local looking for adventure, relaxation, or family-friendly activities, or a honeymooner seeking a romantic escape, we have you covered. From personalized sightseeing tours to custom outdoor adventures, and even specialized packages for medical travelers, we are committed to crafting the perfect holiday for our customers.

**As we celebrate women this March, International Women's Day spotlights the imperative to "Invest in Women: Accelerate Progress." What significance does this proclamation hold for you personally and within the ethos of Sunland Journeys?**

For me, it signifies a commitment to empowering and supporting women in all aspects of life, ensuring their voices are heard and their contributions valued. Within Sunland Journeys, this theme underscores our steadfast dedication to creating opportunities for women in the travel industry and advocating for gender equality. Currently, Sunland Journeys has a majority of women in its workforce, and we celebrate the progress these remarkable women have made within the company and the industry. We strongly believe that by investing in women, we not only drive progress within our organization but also contribute to positive change on a global scale.

**Peering into the future, what is your vision for Sunland Journeys under your stewardship, and how do you intend to navigate forthcoming trends and obstacles within the ever-evolving landscape of the travel industry?**

Under my leadership, I envision Sunland Journeys becoming a pioneer in the travel industry, renowned for innovation, sustainability, and exceptional service. My vision includes utilizing emerging technology to enhance customer experiences, while also prioritizing environmental responsibility. As we navigate the dynamic landscape of travel, we will remain flexible in adapting to industry trends and overcoming challenges by staying informed about evolving consumer preferences and global developments. Through strategic partnerships and a willingness to embrace change, we will position Sunland Journeys as a forward-thinking and resilient leader in the travel industry.



**As an individual who has ascended the ranks within the same organization, what counsel would you impart to professionals aspiring for growth and advancement within their current corporate milieu?**

My journey within this organization has been truly transformative, both personally and professionally. I feel incredibly honored to have had the opportunities for growth that have come my way. Starting as a Reservation & Ticketing Officer and reaching my current position has been a result of my unwavering dedication and commitment. My passion for the industry and my focus on exceptional customer service have been the driving forces behind my journey. While it's common for people to look for opportunities elsewhere, I've found that staying loyal to one organization can provide invaluable knowledge and experience. I firmly believe that real career growth comes from consistent effort and dedication, rather than looking for quick solutions. It's a journey that requires patience, perseverance, and a strong sense of purpose.

I've also had the privilege of conducting training sessions for students interested in aviation and evaluating exams related to Reservations & Ticketing organized by MNSDA. Some students may feel uncertain about career prospects in this industry. However, I want to reassure our young generation that aviation is a dynamic and promising field, full of opportunities for career growth and personal development. It's an exciting field, and for those who are passionate about it, it can lead to a successful and fulfilling career.



## WOMEN'S DAY SPECIAL

**Moomina Ibrahim**

A true female pioneer in a primarily male-dominated industry, Moomina Ibrahim is the first female football commentator in the world. She was a radio host by profession when she got the opportunity to commentate on a local football match. Her timely delivery and enthusiastic tone garnered the attention of avid football fans; and from then on, audiences from throughout the country tuned in to listen to her entertaining commentary – she became a sensation. Now retired, her commentary is still often brought up during football season, an iconic memory for football and radio fans alike.

**Sameeha Abdul Hakeem**

Sameeha Abdul Hakeem made history as the Maldives' first female pilot. Her journey began when she heard about Air Maldives recruiting pilots in 1992 while at the Science Education Centre (SEC). Despite a tight schedule between classes, she managed to attend the interview in her school uniform. To her surprise, she received confirmation of her selection just 10 days later. Following several challenging training sessions, she achieved her goal of becoming the Maldives' first female pilot. Today, Sameeha continues her contributions to aviation safety by ensuring regulatory compliance, conducting audits, and performing inspections.

**Dr. Naila Ibrahim Didi**

The first Maldivian Obstetrician and Gynaecologist, Dr. Naila is a pioneer in the Maldives' medical industry. An advocate for the advancement of women and children's healthcare in the Maldives, she co-founded the Society of Health Education (SHE). A non-profit working towards spreading social awareness and medical resources; SHE has received notable acclaim from the United Nations and the Commonwealth. Alongside her medical career, Dr. Naila is well known among the community for her artistry. Her intricate paintings depicting the underwater life of the Maldives are loved and admired throughout the country.

**Fathmath Dheema Ali**

A rising star in the sports scene, Dheema is the youngest and first Maldivian player to have won an international medal in Table Tennis. Her talent for the sport was realized at the age of 8 when she was crowned the champion of the under-11 age category at a Malaysian table tennis championship. This would become the first step to propel her into national and international-level professional championships; representing the Maldivian national TT team as the first-ranked player in both the junior and senior divisions. The story of this promising young prodigy is still unfolding; she is one of the most loved and supported athletes by the entire nation.

**Dr. Sham'aa Abdulla Hameed**

Dr. Sham'aa (Anna) is a highly respected figure in the diving community, having obtained her PADI Course Director certification in July 2018. Since then, she has been actively involved in elevating the industry, collaborating with various educational and training programs to ensure they remain at the forefront. She achieved Platinum Course Director status in 2020 due to her extensive teaching of instructor-level courses the previous year. Beyond her professional achievements, Anna is also the founder of the Ocean Warriors Institute, where she strives to inspire and empower individuals through diving.



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EVENTS & AWARDS

# Highrise Announces Ace Travels Maldives as the Main Sponsor, with Ace Aviation Services Maldives and Inner Maldives as Co-Sponsors for the 5th Edition of Vacations Expo 2024



The Vacations Expo, hosted by Highrise, is a premier platform dedicated to promoting and advancing the travel and tourism sector. The event will bring together locals, expatriates, trade professionals, and business owners involved in both inbound and outbound travel. Attendees can expect a vibrant marketplace showcasing competitive offerings from airlines, travel agents, tour operators, resorts, guest houses, and transport services, catering to diverse traveler needs.

Scheduled for April 25-27, 2024, this year's expo marks a significant comeback after the pandemic hiatus and represents the 5th consecutive year of Highrise's key sponsorship. The Highrise team invites all stakeholders, exhibitors, and visitors to save the dates for the 5th edition of the Vacations Expo and join in shaping the future of travel and tourism in the Maldives.

**About Ace Travels Maldives:**  
Ace Travels Maldives, established in 2005, has been a pivotal player in fulfilling travel needs and supporting the burgeoning outbound tourism sector in the Maldives. As a wholly locally owned entity, Ace Travels Maldives stands out as a leading Travel and Destination Management Company (TMC & DMC) in the Republic of Maldives.

Diversifying into the aviation industry, Ace Travels Maldives serves as the Passenger Sales Agent (PSA) for several esteemed airlines, including Sri Lankan Airlines, Mihin Lanka, Scoot, Cathay Pacific, Qatar Airways, IndiGo Airlines, Maldivian Airlines, Singapore Airlines, Fly Dubai, Manta Air, Batik Air (Malindo), Air Asia, and is an authorized NDC Agent for Emirates Airline & Oman Air.

With a vision to become the premier supplier of outbound travel services

in the Maldives, Ace Travels Maldives aims to be the ultimate corporate partner by offering efficient, cost-effective services that consistently exceed customer expectations.

Key services provided by Ace Travels Maldives include Flight Tickets (100+ Airlines), Hotel Packages & Tours (Worldwide), MICE Tours & Sports Tours, Special Student Discounts, Special Handlings - Medical Travel, Pilgrim Tours (UMRAH), VIP/CIP Service, Airport Ground Handling, Worldwide Lounge Services, Frequent Flyer Program, Cruise Tours, and Visas & Travel Insurance.

**About Ace Aviation Services Maldives:**  
Ace Aviation Services Maldives, the General Sales Agent for Sri Lankan Airlines in the Maldives, was established in 2011 in partnership with Aitken Spence PLC, SriLankan Airlines, and Inner Maldives Holidays.

The rapid growth of Ace Aviation Services Maldives is attributed to the experience brought in by the joint venture partner and solid management. They were appointed as the SriLankan Airlines General Sales Agent in the Maldives in 2011 and as the General Sales Agent for Mihin Lanka in 2013.

SriLankan Airlines, with the support of Ace Aviation Services, became the first international carrier to operate into the South of Maldives (Addu) with the launch of the ADDU operation in December 2016. This milestone made Ace Aviation Services the first GSA to operate in South Maldives and cover two international destinations (Male & Gan) in SriLankan Airlines' network.

**About Inner Maldives:**  
Established in 1998, Inner Maldives stands as a leading and multi-award-winning brand in the Maldives' travel and tourism sector. With a founding mission centered on delivering top-notch destination management and travel services to the country's burgeoning tourism landscape, Inner Maldives has transformed into a dynamic conglomerate with key interests spanning tourism, aviation, logistic solutions, and trading.

Inner Maldives has garnered widespread acclaim, both domestically and internationally, solidifying its position as a highly respected entity. Notably, the company achieved a significant milestone by spearheading outbound holidays in 2007 through a partnership with SriLankan Airlines' leisure arm, SriLankan Holidays. Moreover, Inner Maldives proudly holds the distinction of being the first Maldivian travel company to clinch the esteemed "Indian Ocean's Leading Travel Agency" accolade at the World Travel Awards.

Further enhancing its profile, Inner Maldives serves as the distributor and General Sales Agent in the Maldives for flydubai, a partnership initiated with the airline's inaugural operations to the Maldives in 2013.



# South Asian Travel Awards (SATA) 2024 Opens for Nominations

South Asia's premier tourism and hospitality recognition, the South Asian Travel Awards (SATA), is thrilled to announce the commencement of nominations for the 2024 edition. Since its inception in 2016, SATA has been a beacon, acknowledging excellence in the region's travel and tourism industry. This annual event honors outstanding organizations and individuals across a diverse range of categories.

### Revamped Categories and Expanded Opportunities

SATA 2024 introduces revamped categories, providing properties and brands with expanded opportunities to showcase their prowess. Alongside the existing recognition, the awards now feature the Visitors Choice Awards and Special Recognition Awards.

### Endorsement by the following International and Government Agencies:

- Association of Professionals in Tourism (APT)
- Association of Tourism Trade Organizations, India (ATTOI)
- Association of Travel Agents (ATA)

- Colombo Chamber of Commerce (CCC)
- Confederation of Accredited Tour Operators (CATO)
- Federation of Chambers of Commerce & Industry of Sri Lanka (FCCISL)
- Hotel and Restaurant Association of Bhutan (HRAB)
- Kerala Hotel General Manager Club (KHGMC)
- National Boating Association of Maldives (NBAM)
- Maldives Association of Travel Agents and Tour Operators (MATATO)
- Maldives Marketing & PR Corporation (MMPRC)
- Nepal Tourism Board (NTB)
- Sri Lanka Association of Inbound Tour Operators (SLAITO)
- The Hotels Association of Sri Lanka (THASL)
- Hotel Association Nepal (HAN)
- Bangladesh International Hotel Association (BIHA)
- The Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI)

**A Platform for Networking and Trends**  
More than just an awards ceremony, SATA serves as a platform to showcase the latest



trends and developments in South Asia's travel and tourism industry. It offers networking opportunities for industry professionals to share ideas and insights.

**Nominations Open Until April 10, 2024**  
Properties aspiring for recognition can now submit their nominations online at [www.southasiantravelawards.com](http://www.southasiantravelawards.com) until April 10, 2024.

SATA 2024 continues its tradition of promoting excellence and innovation in the

travel and tourism industry. As one of the most prestigious awards in South Asia, it not only recognizes the achievements of the winners but also contributes significantly to the growth and success of the sector in the region. The South Asian Travel Awards (SATA) is an annual event that recognizes and celebrates the best in the travel and tourism industry in South Asia. The awards ceremony recognizes the achievements of hotels, airlines, destinations, and other organizations that contribute to the growth and success of the travel and tourism industry in the region.



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IN THE NEWS

# Lord Jonathan Marland, Chairman of CWEIC Visits the Maldives

In an evening marked by esteemed guests and dignitaries, a special dinner was hosted in honor of Lord Jonathan Marland, Chairman of the Advisory Council of Commonwealth Enterprise and Investment Council (CWEIC)’s visit to Maldives.

The event, held at Bandos Island Resort under the auspices of Mr. Mohamed Ali Janah, Host of the event and Chairman of Hotels and Resorts Investments Maldives (HARIM), President of Maldives National Association of Construction Industry, and Member of Advisory Council of CWEIC, saw a convergence of notable personalities including government officials, senior representatives from state-owned enterprises and private establishments, and members of various national associations and governing bodies.

CWEIC, a prestigious commercial organization mandated by the Commonwealth Heads of Government, boasts a network of approximately 140 strategic partners from 35 countries and territories, facilitating trade and investment across the 56 Commonwealth member nations. With esteemed members such as Standard Chartered, Zenith Bank, Trade & Investment Queensland, and the Government of Maldives, CWEIC leverages the Commonwealth’s trusted network to foster economic growth and development.

Prior to commencing the event, Lord Marland spoke to the local media in regards to his visit to the Maldives, looking forward to continuing with positive relations between CWEIC and Maldives businesses as well as future initiatives.

During the event, Mr. Mohamed Ali Janah emphasized the importance of the evening, reflecting on the pivotal role of CWEIC in driving global commerce and investment. Following Mr. Janah’s remarks, Lord Jonathan Marland expressed gratitude for the warm reception and reiterated CWEIC’s dedication to enhancing economic partnerships across the Commonwealth.

At the event, an MoU was signed between HARIM and CWEIC to establish a CWEIC Hub for investment and promotion in the Maldives. Mr. Ahmed Jasim Janah, Group Chief Strategy Officer, signed the MoU on behalf of HARIM, while Lord Jonathan Marland represented CWEIC. Speaking at the event, Mr. Jasim shared insightful remarks highlighting the significance of collaboration and innovation especially with international associations such as



CWEIC in shaping the future of commerce and investment in the Maldives.

Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Ms. Sheryna Abdul Samad, lauded the collaborative efforts of CWEIC in promoting sustainable development and prosperity. In her closing remarks, Ms. Ayesha Nurain Janah, Vice Chair of HARIM, highlighted the crucial role of Maldivian youths as entrepreneurs driving positive change. She emphasized the importance of family and bonds for personal growth and societal improvement, urging youth to seize opportunities and uphold familial values.

# Gulf Craft Maldives Showcases Revolutionary Vessels at the Maldives Marine Expo 2024



Gulf Craft Maldives, the Maldivian arm of Gulf Craft, the world’s premier fully integrated boat and yacht manufacturers showcased its latest innovations, including the debut of the ground-breaking Grand Touring 46 VIP, a new multi-hull design offering an alternative to mono-hull Touring vessels, and the SC32 CC at the Maldives Marine Expo 2024 which took place from February 8 - 11 at Central Park, Hulhumale, Male, Maldives.

The Grand Touring 46 VIP, featuring a multi-hull design, promises unparalleled flexibility and comfort, setting a new standard for luxury marine transport. This revolutionary vessel, making its debut at the Maldives Marine Expo, boasts a VIP layout, offering an exquisite experience for discerning clientele. Additionally, alternative layouts such as Ferry, Diving, and Coastguard are available, catering to diverse needs and applications.

The SC32 CC, a sporty and versatile center console model, offers a dynamic experience for enthusiasts and adventurers alike. With its sleek design and powerful performance, the SC32 CC is perfect for leisure cruising and exhilarating water sports activities.

"The Grand Touring 46 VIP and the SC32 CC represent a significant milestone in Gulf Craft Maldives’ journey of innovation and excellence," said Mohammed Alshaali, Chairman of Gulf Craft. "With their unique designs and versatile capabilities, these vessels embody our commitment to meeting the diverse needs of our clientele. We are excited to debut these ground-breaking models at the Maldives Marine Expo and set a new benchmark for luxury marine transport in the region."

Gulf Craft Maldives’ participation at the Maldives Marine Expo 2024 underscores its ongoing collaboration with the Maldives hub to develop and expand offerings for the Southeast Asian market. With a rich heritage of craftsmanship and innovation dating back to 2002 when Gulf Craft first established its presence in the Maldives, Gulf Craft Maldives remains a driving force in the region, committed to delivering unparalleled experiences on the water.





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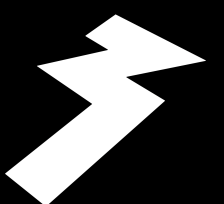
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IN THE NEWS

# Ooredoo Maldives Introduces M-faisaa Travel Insurance with Amana Takaful



Ooredoo Maldives introduces m-faisaa Travel Insurance with Amana Takaful. This is a digital insurance package formulated for overseas travelers designed to be easily purchased via m-faisaa. The insurance package will cover various incidents that may happen during the travel that causes monetary loss for the customer.

M-faisaa travel insurance package will cover up to MVR 771,000 for disability and death due to

accidents during the insured period. Additionally, the package will cover up to MVR 1,542,000 for emergency medicals. Additionally, the package will cover cancellation curtailment, loss of passport and loss of checked in baggage. The package also entails incidents in which the customer can be compensated for missed departure or connection flight and travel delays of over 12 hours.

Customers can purchase the m-faisaa Travel

Insurance policy for 14 days - 35 days. This policy includes the lowest rate for travel insurance for Asian countries. The policy also includes packages for America and Canada. m-faisaa travel insurance is currently the lowest priced travel insurance in the market and is based in the country you are traveling to. The packages start from MVR 117 to Asian countries. "Digital transformation presents numerous opportunities for the insurance sector, effectively addressing its challenges. The notion that people often discover their preferences once presented with options." Ibrahim Riyaz, GM, Amana Takaful.

"Today, we have launched a digital Travel insurance together with Amana Takaful. Customers have the option to conveniently purchase this policy with m-faisaa via Ooredoo SuperApp. Ooredoo Maldives is constantly striving to provide products and services for our customers in this digital age. Customers can look forward to diverse insurance plans from our partnership with Amana Takaful." Hussain Niyaz, Chief Commercial Officer, Ooredoo Maldives.

This Insurance plan can be purchased by any individual under the age of 65. Customers can choose to add on multiple travelers to one plan. To claim insurance, customers should provide details and submit the required documents to Amana Takaful as soon as possible.

# Maldivian and JA Manafaru Partner for Seamless Air Travel to Haa Alifu Atoll

Maldivian, the national airline of the Maldives, has announced an exclusive partnership with JA Manafaru, a prestigious resort in Haa Alifu Atoll, to optimize domestic air transfer services. This collaboration prioritizes enhanced accessibility and an elevated travel experience for guests traveling from Velana International Airport.

The partnership demonstrates Maldivian's commitment to providing quality travel solutions within its extensive domestic flight network. The airline's expansion to Hoarafushi Airport promises increased convenience and comfort for travelers heading to Haa Alifu Atoll.

This alliance reinforces the focus on seamless travel within the Maldives. Guests of JA Manafaru can anticipate a hassle-free journey, starting with their arrival at Velana International Airport.

JA Manafaru located in Noonu Atoll offers Experience an idyllic escape in the secluded sanctuary of JA Manafaru. Within the crystal-clear waters of the Indian Ocean lies this tropical castaway island. Imagine a blend of the serenity of the Maldives with five dining venues and a selection



of unique private dining experiences with 'Dine By Design', extensive leisure activities plus therapeutic

spa treatments, wellness programs and fitness facilities.



IN THE NEWS

# Jalboot Marine Services Expands Luxury Yacht Charter Services with Mazarin in the Maldives



Jalboot Marine Services, a distinguished leader in the marine leisure industry has announced a significant expansion of its services, proudly introducing spot charter offerings featuring the exquisite Mazarin motor yacht in the captivating Maldives.

A marvel of engineering, the Mazarin, a meticulously crafted 66ft motor yacht, stands ready to redefine the Maldives holiday experience. With the ability to host up to 23 guests, this lavish vessel ensures an unforgettable journey through the crystal-clear waters of the Maldivian archipelago.

Key Features of Mazarin:

**Luxurious Accommodations:** The interior of the Mazarin unveils a sanctuary of elegance, featuring a master bedroom, a guest bedroom with an attached bathroom, and intricately designed crew members' quarters. This unique layout ensures comfort for everyone on board.

**Gourmet Galley:** Culinary excellence takes center stage in the galley area, equipped with a fully functional kitchen, oven, coffee machine, sink, dish washing machine, refrigerator, and an elaborate bar counter. Complimentary soft drinks will only enhance an unforgettable culinary experience throughout the voyage.

**Deck Salon:** The chic deck salon features L-shaped seating, providing a cozy spot for guests to socialize and soak in the stunning Maldivian surroundings.

**Sunbed Area:** Mazarin features a dedicated sunbed area, allowing passengers to bask in the warm Maldivian sun while enjoying the serenity of the ocean.

**Open Seating Area:** Passengers are invited to revel in relaxation within the open seating area, providing the perfect backdrop for indulging in delectable meals and snacks while surrounded by the awe-inspiring beauty of the Maldives.

With Jalboot's marine experience, an expansion into spot charter services signifies Jalboot Marine Services' commitment to providing unparalleled luxury experiences for travelers seeking a unique and personalized way to explore the Maldives.

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BON APPÉTIT

# Maldivian Fish Curry



*Chef Ashan Madusanka, a 33-year-old from Colombo, Sri Lanka, began his culinary career in 2010 at the Mount Lavinia Hotel. After three years, he moved to Doha, Qatar, joining Lenôtre Paris for over four years, mastering French cuisine. Returning to Sri Lanka, he worked at Barracuda, expanding his skills. In 2019, he became Head Chef at Islander's Grill, Sun Siyam Iru Fushi, Maldives. Ashan excels in menu planning, recipe implementation, and diverse cuisines like Italian, French, Arabic, and Asian. Fluent in multiple languages, including Italian, French, and Arabic, he connects with international teams and guests. With over a decade of experience, Chef Ashan Madusanka continues to inspire through his culinary excellence and dedication to fine dining.*

Fish curry is an iconic dish in the Maldives, featuring a sea bream head and vegetables in a spicy curry, reflecting the nation's multicultural identity. Che Ashan's recipe at Sun Siyam Iru Fushi is inspired by the resort's partnership with local fishing communities, emphasizing sustainability and cultural preservation. The dish highlights locally caught reef fish, supporting marine ecosystem preservation and coastal livelihoods. With indigenous ingredients like coconut and aromatic spices, the curry offers a sensory journey into Maldivian cuisine, showcasing tradition and innovation. Sun Siyam Iru Fushi's culinary narrative intertwines with the sea's bounty, symbolizing a commitment to sustainability and community empowerment. Through each serving, guests not only enjoy a culinary masterpiece but also partake in a story celebrating the interconnectedness of land, sea, and culture in the Maldives.

INGRIDENTS:		
• Reef Fish (cut into 2.5 cm cubes)	200	gm
• Pomice Olive Oil	20	gm
• Onion Slice	150	gm
• Garlic Slice	5	gm
• Green Chilli	10	gm
• Curry Leaves	1	gm
• Rampe Leaves	1	gm
• Tomato	200	gm
• Cardamon	3	gm
• Cloves	2	gm
• Turmeric	2	gm
• Curry Powder	5	gm
• Chilli Powder	2	gm
• Coconut Milk	150	gm
• Water	100	gm
• Steamed Rice	1	gm
• Cucumber	25	gm
• Lime Juice	20	gm
• Yoghurt	2	gm
• Salt	2	gm

METHOD:	
1.	Heat the thick bottom pot on the stove with olive oil.
2.	Add onion, garlic, green chilli, curry leaves, rampe, cloves and cardamon, saute till golden colour.
3.	Add turmeric, chilli powder and curry powder, saute for a 10 minutes with tomato, add some water if curry becomes too thick.
4.	Add fish and continue to cook on medium heat until tender.
5.	Add cocomut milk, simmer for 2 minutes,
6.	Serve curry with white rice, cucumber, tomato and onion raita.
7.	Raita: Add onion, cucumber to yoghurt and mix it well.



Courtesy  
Ashan Madusanka Silva Walichchoru  
Head Chef of Islander's Grill



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# Frankly Speaking

As more women break into male-dominated industries and rise to leadership positions, what strategies and insights can we share to empower and support one another in navigating the challenges and seizing the opportunities of these traditionally male-dominated fields?



**Saazu Saeed**  
Ocean and Terrestrial Conservationist

By building a network of supportive like minded women in male-dominated industries can be incredibly empowering. Sharing challenges, experiences and advice from each other can be valuable.

Because these women can understand the challenges you may face and offer insights and strategies to navigate, they can provide encouragement and opportunities for collaboration.



**Nayomi Tennakoon**  
Manager  
SriLankan Airlines

Organizations that encourage and empower women in leadership not only create a diverse workforce but also unleash unique perspectives into their work environment.

As an individual who has worked in the male-dominated aviation industry, my advice is to surround yourself with people who believe and support your strengths. Always refine your identity to steer your career in the direction you desire.



**Hawwa Nafeela**  
General Manager  
Voyages Maldives

It's essential to seize every opportunity that comes your way, whether it's being offered basic training at your workplace or volunteering to tackle tasks outside your usual job description. By going above and beyond, you demonstrate to your superiors your capability and your drive to succeed.



**Azma Abdullah**  
Executive Vice President  
Sunland Journeys

Women should be given equal opportunities to navigate the challenges. Focus on building confidence and develop skills that are essential. Invest in their professional development through education and training. Hear the voice of women. Advocate people for gender equality and minimize the gender stereotypes in the community.



**Ibrahim Nizam**  
Brand Strategist  
Hospitality Consultant

Let me share some strategies and insights:

There can be many strategies to empower and support one another such as establishing a support system and mentorship relationships. But the answer is very simple. The best strategy is making a conscious effort so that women can have a guaranteed seat at the table and ensuring that their voices are heard, and taken into account when making decisions. That is the first and most important step we must make before following through with other strategies.



**Shiuna Khalid**  
Managing Director  
MITDC

Based on my professional observations, women continue to face significant challenges and setbacks when entering male-dominated industries. This issue has occurred within certain industry groups, where women are often marginalized, disrespected, and overlooked, especially when aspiring to leadership positions. Such environments not only stifle individual growth and innovation but also hinder the collective advancement of the industry.

Despite these challenges, there is a tangible wave of optimism sweeping across the landscape, largely fueled by progressive leadership. The commitment to integrating female leaders within the governmental framework sets a precedent that, if mirrored in the private sector, could significantly alter the dynamics of male-dominated industries.

To support and empower women in these sectors, the following strategies are recommended: establishing strong professional networks; enhancing self-confidence and assertiveness; capitalizing on unique perspectives and skills; committing to ongoing professional development; increasing visibility through personal branding; cultivating a supportive workplace culture; addressing workplace biases and inequalities; maintaining a healthy work-life balance; acknowledging and celebrating professional accomplishments; and participating in or forming supportive industry groups.

By adopting and implementing these strategies, we can move closer to dismantling the barriers that women face in male-dominated industries, paving the way for a more inclusive, equitable, and prosperous professional landscape.



**Fathmath Hazrath**  
Manager  
SriLankan Airlines

We can drive positive change and pave the way for future generations of women leaders.

I personally believe that by having a simplified strategy, women certainly can seize the opportunities of traditionally male-dominated fields

1. Voice against gender stereotypes and biases in the workplace by promoting diversity and opportunities. While fostering a culture of respect and acceptance.
2. Women should step out of our comfort zone, and should not hesitate to take on challenges. Have a clear understanding that every setback is an opportunity for growth and learning.
3. Take on leadership roles and develop your leadership skills and seek out training and development opportunities. Believe in your abilities, speak up for yourself. assert your ideas and opinions with conviction. Sharpen your decision making abilities at most critical situation especially in the absence of a male counterpart
4. Last but not the least, spend more time with like-minded or females in similar industries through networking events, online forums, and professional organizations. Such engagement can bring in innovative ideas and possible mentorship

Breaking into male-dominated industries and ascending to leadership roles can be challenging but incredibly rewarding.



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