

The islandchief

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Email : news@islandchief.com | Hotline : +960 7980088



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with

Hawwa Nafeela

General Manager
VOYAGES MALDIVES



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Ali Nawaaz

Cover Photography
Mohamed Shafiu (Zippo)
Maadhih Hussain

Web Development
Ahmed Fazeel
Ibrahim Nisham (Paighde)

Distribution
Shahid Uddin

Website:



Address:
Maldives Publications Pvt Ltd
Champa Building 4, 5th Floor
Orchid Magu,
Male' City 20189
Maldives

Mobile : +960 798-0088
Phone : +960 3306606, 3307898
Email : sales@islandchief.com

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Dear Readers,

October unfolds with a renewed sense of purpose and momentum across the Maldives' tourism and aviation landscapes, a season that beautifully embodies the industry's spirit of collaboration, innovation, and sustainability. Each feature in this edition of The Islandchief weaves a distinct narrative of transformation from groundbreaking airline partnerships to visionary hospitality ventures — all shaping the evolving story of Maldivian travel.

We open with a landmark alliance between Azerbaijan Airlines and Maldivian, strengthening the ties that bridge cultures and skies. Equally noteworthy is Hideaway Beach Resort & Spa's collaboration with beOnd, which reimagines the art of luxury travel through an all-premium, seamless experience. These milestones stand as powerful testaments to the Maldives' growing stature on the global stage. The SITA Aerotech Connect 2025 further underscored this evolution, spotlighting how AI and digital transformation are redefining the travel ecosystem. Meanwhile, MATI's National Tourism Day Gala paid heartfelt tribute to the late Mr. Mohamed Umar Maniku, honoring the visionaries whose foresight laid the foundation of our tourism legacy. Adding a creative flourish, Visit Maldives' Book of Records invites travelers to rediscover the islands through a lens of achievement and adventure — where heritage, culture, and curiosity converge.

Our cover story celebrates Ms. Hawwa Nafeela, General Manager of Voyages Maldives, who's remarkable 25-year journey with the company embodies perseverance, humility, and leadership. From her early days as an Administrative Officer to leading one of the nation's most respected travel and safari operators, Nafeela's story is one of grace and grit. In this exclusive interview, she reflects on her professional evolution, the changing tides of the Maldives' tourism and boating sectors, and the enduring values that sustain her success — from nurturing homegrown talent to safeguarding the authentic warmth that defines Maldivian hospitality.

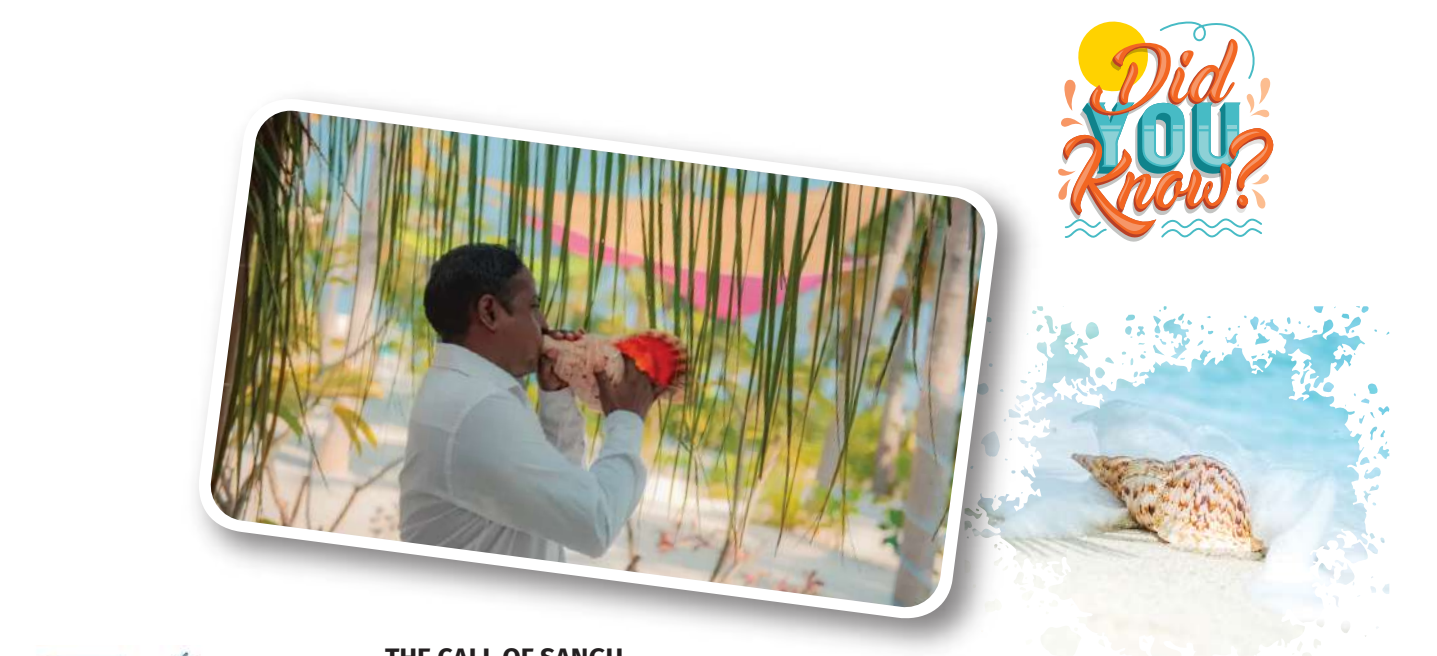
In our Bon Appétit section, we feature Chef Sadun, Junior Sous Chef at Sheraton Maldives Full Moon Resort & Spa, who presents his signature creation — Green-Coated Lamb Rack with Zucchini Cannelloni. Since joining the resort in 2016, Chef Sadun's passion and artistry have elevated him from Commis I at Sea Salt, the resort's fine dining Italian seafood restaurant, to his current leadership role overseeing both Sea Salt and Kakuni Hut. His culinary mastery, refined through experiences at renowned Sri Lankan establishments such as Hilton Colombo and Galle Face Hotel, has earned him multiple accolades, including a Silver Award at the Food and Hospitality Asia competition.

Finally, in our Frankly Speaking column, industry voices weigh in on the potential implications of allowing shark fishing within Maldivian waters highlighting how such decisions could reshape the delicate balance between marine conservation and tourism. Their perspectives underscore the critical link between protecting ocean biodiversity and sustaining the country's most vibrant tourism experiences from diving and snorkeling to marine safaris that rely on the thriving presence of sharks.

Collectively, these stories embody a nation and an industry propelled by vision, unity, and progress, one that continues to connect worlds, celebrate innovation, and inspire every traveler drawn to the Maldivian spirit.

Here's to another month of inspiration, discovery, and purpose.

Until next time,
The Islandchief Team



THE CALL OF SANGU

Traditionally, the Call of the Sangu referred to the island chief (katheeb) blowing a conch shell to summon islanders for gatherings, community work, or emergencies. It was an essential means of communication, with distinct blowing patterns signaling different groups or messages. Today, while modern technology has replaced its practical use, the sangu endures as a cherished cultural symbol. Many Maldivian resorts and communities continue the tradition as a ceremonial gesture, welcoming guests or marking special moments, preserving the spirit of unity and heritage it once represented.

Photo credit: The Ritz-Carlton Maldives, Fari Islands

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ACROSS THE SKIES

Hideaway Beach Resort & Spa Partners with beOnd to Elevate Premium Leisure Travel



Hideaway Beach Resort & Spa, an award-winning luxury resort in the Maldives has announced a new partnership with beOnd, the world's first premium leisure airline. This collaboration brings together two leading luxury brands to provide guests with seamless, elevated journeys to one of the most beautiful

corners of the Maldives.

As part of this partnership, travellers booking with beOnd can unlock an exclusive Hideaway offer available until 30 September 2025, for stays through to 23 December 2026. The package includes exceptional value-added benefits such as:

- Complimentary round-trip transfers to Hideaway Beach Resort & Spa
- Up to 40% off room rates
- Complimentary meal plan upgrades

Guests of Hideaway Beach Resort & Spa also benefit from a 10% discount on base fare when they book beOnd's all-business class flight to the Maldives from anywhere within the airline's global network, which currently includes Dubai (DWC), Milan (MXP), Munich, Riyadh and Zurich.

This collaboration ensures guests enjoy seamless journeys paired with extraordinary island experiences – from the moment they book their flights with beOnd to the time they step onto the pristine beaches of Hideaway.

In line with Hideaway's commitment to creating meaningful moments for every

traveller, the collaboration highlights beOnd's newly launched 'Winter, Your Way' campaign. Families can look forward to a winter escape that balances quality time together with relaxation for parents and excitement for children, all set against the backdrop of Hideaway's pristine white sands and crystal-clear lagoons.

beOnd, launched in 2023, is redefining air travel with its all-premium leisure service. Featuring an award-winning all-lie-flat cabin on its single-aisle Airbus A320 family aircraft, the airline delivers a private jet-like experience to key markets across Europe and the Middle East. Guests can also now benefit from Apple Pay integration, making the booking process faster, safer, and more effortless across supported devices.

Emirates Launches World-Class Facility for 25,000 Cabin Crew

Emirates has unveiled a new world-class facility in Dubai dedicated to training nearly 25,000 cabin crew in luxury hospitality. The USD 8 million Emirates Centre of Hospitality Excellence features a restaurant and lounge for 170 guests, presentation kitchens, and eight tech-enabled classrooms. By the end of the year, more than 10,000 cabin crew will be trained at this new centre, enhancing Emirates' hallmark of service excellence.

Modelled on Michelin-star standards, the centre provides comprehensive training in fine dining, premium guest engagement, and table service finesse. Developed in collaboration with Switzerland's prestigious Ecole hôtelière de Lausanne, the programme reflects Emirates' four hospitality pillars: excellence, attentiveness, innovation, and passion. Thomas Ney, Emirates' DSVP of Service Delivery, said the initiative reinforces Emirates' "fly better"

experience by empowering cabin crew to create unforgettable signature moments for guests.

New and existing crew members will benefit from immersive fine dining experiences, including a gourmet four-course lunch prepared by Emirates' master chefs. The sessions allow trainees to experience Emirates' award-winning First and Business Class cuisine from a guest's perspective, helping them understand how authenticity, personality, and emotional connection define the airline's "7-star" hospitality.

The culinary hub includes a purpose-built training kitchen blending professional restaurant design with an airline galley setup. Here, cabin crew learn from master chefs the art of plating, balancing colour, texture, and form to create visually stunning dishes. Complementing this,



"The Art of Service" course focuses on communication, emotional intelligence, and the deeper meaning of hospitality – encouraging crew to anticipate guest needs and craft personalised experiences.

The centre also hosts Emirates' L'art du vin programme, offering wine training led by sommeliers and expert trainers. Designed for varying skill levels, the programme helps cabin crew understand the heritage and characteristics of Emirates' curated wine selection while learning to recommend pairings to elevate the

onboard dining experience.

The Emirates Centre of Hospitality Excellence joins the airline's suite of advanced training facilities, including the recently launched Crew Zone at Emirates Group Headquarters. With nearly 25,000 multinational cabin crew representing over 140 nationalities, Emirates continues to invest in developing world-class professionals. Through a blend of theory, practical training, and ongoing upskilling, Emirates ensures its crew embody the brand's global reputation for service, safety, and hospitality excellence.



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IN A NUTSHELL

The Ritz-Carlton Maldives, Fari Islands to Host Week-Long Autumn and Halloween Festival

The Ritz-Carlton Maldives, Fari Islands, is preparing to welcome guests to a week-long Autumn Festival with Halloween-themed celebrations running from 30 October to 5 November. The programme features a variety of activities designed for families, couples, and individual travellers, with events ranging from treasure hunts and creative workshops to wellness sessions and exclusive dining experiences.

The celebrations begin on 30 October with a beachside Tabata workout followed by a pumpkin carving workshop at La Locanda. Activities for children and teens include the Magic of Mantas virtual reality exploration, Haunted Brick Builders, and the Autumn Costume Fashion Show. Parents are invited to a cocktail gathering on the shore before the evening concludes with a Culinary Maestro dinner by Michelin-starred Chef Max Strohe, as part of the resort's Masters of Crafts series.

On 31 October, guests may join a morning Dynamic Flow Yoga session in the Mystique Garden or take part in a turtle snorkelling excursion. Children between four and twelve are encouraged to join the Flying Fox Quest, a Halloween-themed nature walk, while older children embark on an Island Treasure Quest. Seasonal workshops such as wreath decoration and creative pumpkin carving are available, and the day concludes with a Trick or Treat Treasure Hunt across the island and a Halloween Feast at La Locanda.

As the week progresses, the festival highlights wellness and creativity. Under the Masters of Crafts programme, mobility coach Anthony Green will host sessions on posture, flexibility, and spinal health. Seasonal crafts for younger guests include galaxy-themed pumpkin art, Halloween decorations, wand-making, and mask workshops. Family activities extend to Autumn Carnival Stalls, Magic Hat



bowling, and themed cooking sessions. Evening entertainment includes a magic show, a piñata party, and further culinary experiences led by Chef Max Strohe.

The festival concludes on 5 November with a Vinsaya Flow Yoga session in the Mystique Garden, an art class featuring batfish designs on tote bags, and a children's treasure hunt. Families

are invited to join the Boos and Brews Halloween Dhoni Cruise before the celebrations end with a Luxury Sunset Cruise.

Through this programme, The Ritz-Carlton Maldives, Fari Islands, combines seasonal festivities with wellness, creativity, and gastronomy, offering guests a diverse celebration of autumn and Halloween in the Maldives.

Finolhu, Successfully Transplants 1200 Coral Colonies



Finolhu, a Seaside Collection Resort, has successfully completed a four-day coral transplantation event, reaffirming its commitment to marine conservation. Spearheaded by the resort's marine biologist, Ivanna Tobar, the initiative saw approximately 1200 coral colonies carefully replanted from Finolhu's nurseries to its house reef, bolstering one of the Maldives' most vital marine ecosystems.

The event was distinguished by its spirit of collaboration, with four marine biologists from neighboring resorts—including Joali Being, Westin, Coco Palm, and Dusit Thani — joining the effort. The visiting experts, Philippa Darbyshire Jenkins from Joali Being, Rosalie Bailie from Coco Palm, Harry Longin from Westin, and Louna Marchand from Dusit Thani, participated in hands-on coral transplantation dives,

equipment preparation, and reef health activities, including the removal of invasive pincushion sea stars.

"This initiative transcends coral restoration," said Steven Phillips, General Manager of Finolhu. "It represents a unique opportunity to unite the resorts, share expertise, and champion marine conservation at the highest level. Vibrant, healthy reefs are essential not only for the Maldives' rich biodiversity but also for the wellbeing of local communities and the continued excellence of sustainable luxury tourism. Through our collaborative effort, we have made a significant, lasting impact safeguarding these pristine underwater landscapes for our guests and for generations to come."

Coral conservation is particularly crucial in the Maldives, where reefs provide natural protection against coastal erosion, support fisheries that local communities depend on, and sustain the nation's thriving tourism industry. Rising ocean temperatures, pollution, and human activity have placed unprecedented stress on these delicate ecosystems, making restoration efforts essential to preserving the country's

natural heritage and ensuring the long-term resilience of its marine environments.

The four-day program was carefully designed to balance restoration work with knowledge exchange. Morning briefings set the stage for the day's dives, while afternoon sessions focused on evaluating reef health and preparing equipment for the next day's activities. Through this comprehensive approach, the initiative not only accelerated coral restoration but also strengthened the region's collective expertise in reef management.

This event reflects Finolhu's broader commitment to environmental stewardship. Beyond coral restoration, the resort actively monitors reef health, manages a coral nursery, and develops sustainable marine practices, ensuring that its house reef remains vibrant for generations to come. Guests can also participate in conservation-focused experiences, including the resort's Coral Conservation Package, which combines educational activities with opportunities to support ongoing reef restoration efforts.

IN A NUTSHELL

A Legacy of Celebration this Festive Season at The St. Regis Maldives



Since 1904, St. Regis has been synonymous with extraordinary gatherings and the art of celebration. This festive season, The St. Regis Maldives Vommuli Resort reimagines that legacy with a captivating program that blends cherished traditions with contemporary elegance, promising

moments as unforgettable as the setting itself.

As the festive season approaches, The St. Regis Maldives Vommuli Resort transforms into a haven of celebration and tranquility. The island embraces the spirit of the holidays with experiences

that blend timeless traditions and modern sophistication. Inspired by the legendary gatherings of Caroline Astor, the resort invites guests to enjoy days of leisure and evenings filled with elegant rituals, each night ending with a signature champagne toast.

The festive calendar is thoughtfully curated to offer something for everyone. Families can enjoy engaging activities, while those seeking glamour can look forward to gala dinners accompanied by live entertainment and spectacular fireworks. Culinary journeys, signature traditions, and spirited gatherings create an atmosphere of warmth and connection, ensuring memories that last long after the season ends.

Adding to the excitement, the resort welcomes an exceptional lineup of renowned chefs, wellness experts, and sporting icons. Guests can indulge in extraordinary dining experiences, rejuvenating wellness sessions, and unique activities designed to inspire.

Evenings are brought to life with soulful saxophone melodies, graceful violin performances, and vibrant shows. The highlight of each night is the iconic champagne sabering ritual, followed by fireworks that illuminate the Maldivian sky.

To make the festive escape even more rewarding, The St. Regis Maldives offers exclusive privileges. Guests can enjoy seasonal rates for stays of four nights or more, daily breakfast for two at ALBA, a USD 200 daily resort credit for dining or spa indulgence, complimentary non-motorized watersports, and the signature St. Regis Butler Service throughout their stay.

As the new year begins, the resort continues its tradition of celebration, honoring heritage, artistry, and the joy of togetherness. Guests are invited to create unforgettable festive memories through themed events and timeless rituals that embody the art of celebration at The Finest Address in the Maldives.

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MOVERS & SHAKERS

Naladhu Private Island Maldives Appoints Ali Shameem as Resort Manager

Naladhu Private Island Maldives, a luxury resort in the South Male Atoll, has announced the appointment of veteran hotelier Ali Shameem as its new Resort Manager. With over two decades of hospitality experience, Shameem brings expertise across hotel operations, food and beverage, and front office management.

Shameem is no stranger to Minor Hotels, having previously worked at Soneva, Anantara, and Kudadoo Maldives Private Island, where he served as Resort Manager from 2023 to 2025. "It was literally a homecoming for me, as I've spent the best years of my career in Anantara Kihavah Maldives Villas, and re-joining the

group was always a dream," he shared. As Resort Manager, the Maldivian native will oversee operations of the 20 elegant houses with private pools and The Living Room, the resort's sole dining venue. He has set his sights on positioning Naladhu as one of the best private island resorts globally, aiming for a Forbes five-star rating by 2026.

Jason Kruse, Complex General Manager of Anantara Maldives, expressed confidence in the appointment: "With his deep knowledge and experience of operations in the Maldives, I know Shameem will deliver great value for our guests, owners and team members, and successfully drive the resort's

purpose forward."

Long celebrated among locals for its natural beauty, Naladhu Private Island Maldives offers guests bespoke experiences in tropical seclusion, just a 30-minute cruise from Velana International Airport. Its unique "no menu" concept and all-day breakfast service further set it apart.

Shameem, known for mentoring and inspiring future leaders in hospitality, sees this appointment as a milestone in his career. "In today's world, simplicity and personalisation are at the heart of luxury. My team and I are committed to making Naladhu Private Island Maldives an even more iconic



destination through genuine care and bespoke service," he said.

Bulgari Hotels & Resorts Appoints Enver Arslan as General Manager of Bulgari Resort Ranfushi in the Maldives

Bulgari Hotels & Resorts announced the appointment of Enver Arslan as General Manager of Bulgari Resort Ranfushi, the brand's 10th property and first destination in the Maldives, which is scheduled to open in 2026.

With more than 20 years of experience in ultra-luxury hospitality, Arslan has built a reputation for people-first leadership and for crafting immersive guest journeys rooted in culture, design, and sustainability.

He brings a strong foundation in Food & Beverage, Learning and Development, Quality Assurance, and Resort Operations. Throughout his career, he has held key leadership roles across the United States, the Middle East, and the Maldives, contributing to the successful opening, positioning, and management of acclaimed luxury resorts. In his most recent role, he oversaw multiple properties across the Maldives and Türkiye, while also leading the ultra-luxury segment for a prominent hospitality group. His career reflects a consistent commitment to excellence, innovation, and the creation of meaningful and culturally rich guest experiences.

A graduate of Erciyes University in



Türkiye, with advanced studies in luxury branding and strategic leadership, Arslan brings a global perspective and cultural fluency to his new role. His multilingual skills and international background enable him to lead diverse teams while cultivating connections with discerning global travelers.

According to Oriol Montal, Regional Vice President, Luxury Asia Pacific (excluding China) at Marriott International, "Enver Arslan's appointment marks a significant step

forward for Bulgari Hotels & Resorts as the brand prepares to make its debut in the Maldives. His leadership, vision, and dedication to experiential luxury embody the Bulgari spirit. Under his strategic direction, Bulgari Resort Ranfushi will exemplify the brand's values through its elegant design, respect for nature, and elevated sense of hospitality."

Located within the serene Raa Atoll, just 45 minutes by seaplane from Velana International Airport, Bulgari Resort

Ranfushi will span 20 hectares of unspoiled natural beauty, surrounded by a crystal-clear lagoon rich with marine life. The ultra-luxury resort will feature 54 elegantly designed beach and overwater villas, including an exclusive Bulgari Villa set on its own private island. Designed by the Italian firm ACPV ARCHITECTS Antonio Citterio Patricia Viel, the resort has been thoughtfully conceived with sustainability in mind, reflecting Bulgari's ongoing commitment to living in harmony with nature.

In discussing his new role, Arslan described the appointment as "a privilege," noting that Raa Atoll is one of the Maldives' most pristine gems — abundant, serene, and inspiring. He emphasized his vision of bringing Bulgari's Italian elegance to the destination in a way that is both timeless and sustainable. His approach will blend luxury with the warmth and hospitality of Maldivian culture, evoking moments of connection and lasting memories for every guest. Arslan's leadership style is rooted in a focus on the human experience, combining warmth, storytelling, and thoughtful design. His personal passions for photography, diving, and travel also shape his approach to hospitality, further enriching the guest experience at every touch point.

MOVERS & SHAKERS

Villa Resorts Appoints Muhammad Saleem as Resort Manager for Villa Nautica



focused on building strong teams and delivering consistently high guest satisfaction.

Villa Nautica is a vibrant beachfront resort with 282 villas set along the shore and overwater, offering effortless access from Malé. The resort blends energetic experiences with laid-back luxury, catering to travellers seeking both adventure and relaxation in a social, contemporary setting.

As Resort Manager, Saleem will work alongside General Manager Ibrahim Nahid to oversee day-to-day operations and support the resort’s ongoing development. His appointment reflects a continued emphasis on refining the guest journey and delivering elevated service in line with the evolving expectations of today’s travellers.

Villa Resorts announces the appointment of Muhammad Saleem as the Resort Manager for Villa Nautica.

Saleem brings over 17 years of hospitality experience to his new role, shaped by a career spent at some of the Maldives’ most respected luxury resorts. Known for his calm leadership and operational expertise, he is



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Hawwa Nafeela

General Manager
VOYAGES MALDIVES



For over 25 years, Hawwa Nafeela has been an integral part of Voyages Maldives, rising from Administrative Officer to General Manager of one of the country's most trusted travel and safari operators. Her journey is one of dedication, resilience, and quiet leadership – guided by strong family values and a deep love for travel and nature.

In this exclusive interview with The Islandchief, Nafeela reflects on her remarkable career, the evolution of Maldives' tourism and boating industry, and what it takes to thrive as a woman in leadership. She also shares insights on nurturing talent, adapting to change, and preserving the timeless spirit of Maldivian hospitality that defines Voyages Maldives.

You have been with Voyages Maldives for over 25 years, rising from Administrative Officer to General Manager. What has been the driving force behind your long and successful journey with the company?

Since childhood, I have always aspired to be an exemplary person. Coming from a large family, my parents and elder siblings instilled in me the values of humility, discipline, and responsibility. I wanted to show them that choosing your words and actions wisely, remaining disciplined, and being patient were important – especially in those days when life was challenging and resources were limited.

My grandparents also played a major role in shaping my outlook. My first travel experience was with them, island hopping across Lhaviyani Atoll and spending a few days on an uninhabited island,

relying solely on nature. Later, during my college years overseas, I had the opportunity to explore various cities, villages, and remote areas. That's where my love for travel and nature truly began.

So, when I joined Voyages Maldives, I immediately connected with its values and culture. From the very beginning, I wanted to prove to my superiors and colleagues that I embodied those same values and could live up to the company's standards.

It's also worth noting that Voyages Maldives has retained many of its employees for three to four decades. That kind of loyalty and stability speaks volumes about the work culture and the sense of belonging that motivates us to show up and give our best every day.

As a key figure in shaping talent development strategies at Voyages, what skills and qualities do you believe are most vital for the workforce in Maldives' tourism industry?

The most vital skill is effective communication. More than language fluency, what truly matters is the respect and enthusiasm shown when interacting with customers and colleagues alike.

A positive, can-do attitude and a genuine passion for hospitality are essential. Time management and punctuality are equally important — being dependable and consistent builds trust and ensures smooth operations in such a fast-paced industry.

What challenges have you faced as a female leader in a traditionally male-dominated industry, and how have you navigated them?

At times, balancing work and family — especially as a mother of five — has been challenging. I am fortunate to have an incredibly supportive family, particularly my parents, whose unwavering guidance and encouragement have shaped who I am today. They taught me patience, resilience, and integrity, and showed me that it's possible to pursue your goals while staying grounded. Their support has been invaluable to my growth as a leader.

I have also been blessed with an open and progressive workplace. From the beginning, I was never made to feel that gender was an obstacle to success. My colleagues have always been supportive, sharing experiences and paving the way for others to achieve their goals.

You also play a crucial role in liaising with government authorities. How do you navigate regulatory challenges while keeping business operations smooth?

Adapting to change is key. I make it a point to thoroughly understand new regulations and ensure that information is clearly communicated across all departments, so staff are aware and prepared to handle any potential changes.

Sudden policy shifts can be challenging, especially when they come with short notice. However, we manage them through open communication and teamwork. With strong legal guidance and support from our directors, we are able to navigate these changes effectively and maintain smooth operations.

Having been part of the Executive Management of the National Boating Association of Maldives (NABM), what insights did you gain from that experience that continue to influence your work today?

The most valuable lesson I learned was the power of collaboration — working together to advance the industry as a whole.

There is a huge market for liveaboards, and I've witnessed their evolution from simple fishing boats to luxurious vessels offering diverse experiences such as diving, surfing, and resort excursions.

Surrounding yourself with like-minded people is equally important. They uplift you, and in turn, you

uplift them — a principle I continue to practice.

During my tenure, the association gained national status, which was a proud and defining moment. It proved how shared vision and collective effort can lead to lasting impact.

With nearly three decades of experience, what shifts have you observed in the Maldives tourism and boating industry, and how has Voyages adapted to those changes?

Over the years, I've seen a rise in luxury private islands and boats, along with steady growth in the liveaboard segment.

Travelers today seek more personalized experiences, with an emphasis on comfort, privacy, and holistic well-being. Yet, what continues to stand out is their appreciation for the warmth of authentic Maldivian hospitality.

Voyages Maldives has adapted by upgrading our services and evolving to meet these changing expectations, while staying true to our values.

one of the best decisions of my life — a defining milestone in my career.

Seeing Voyages Maldives achieve major milestones and receive both national and international recognition has also been incredibly rewarding. These moments remind me how far we've come as a team and make me proud to have contributed to that journey.

Voyages Maldives has been a trusted name in the industry for decades. In your view, what has been the company's greatest strength in building lasting relationships with clients and partners?

Trust has always been the cornerstone of Voyages Maldives. We consistently strive to exceed expectations and ensure every client and partner feels valued. Approaching every relationship with sincerity has helped us build long-term connections.

Our enthusiasm and commitment inspire clients and partners to return, allowing us to grow together. Another key strength is the close bond within our team — from our CEO to department heads and



Many young professionals aspire to follow a career path like yours. What advice would you give to women entering the tourism and hospitality field today?

Don't be discouraged by the words or actions of others — stay true to yourself. Build strong relationships with your colleagues and never hesitate to ask questions.

Be open to new experiences and seize opportunities, even if they seem daunting at first. With patience and perseverance, success will follow.

What has been the most rewarding aspect of your career so far, and what moment stands out as a defining highlight?

When I was first offered the role of General Manager, it came as a complete surprise. I wasn't entirely sure I was ready to take on the responsibility, but with encouragement from my family and colleagues, I accepted the challenge. Over time, I've learned, grown, and adjusted to the role. Looking back, it was

managers. This unity and mutual respect set the tone for our company's continued success.

Looking ahead, what are your priorities for Voyages Maldives in terms of people, culture, and regulatory compliance?

Looking ahead, I would love to see more women in safari operations — particularly in roles such as safari captains and tour leaders.

We also plan to continue specialized and on-the-job training programs to further develop our team's skills and foster growth within the company.

At the same time, we remain committed to the traditional Maldivian values that have guided Voyages Maldives from the very beginning — integrity, hospitality, and dedication. Alongside these values, we will continue to uphold strong regulatory compliance, ensuring our operations remain adaptable, responsible, and aligned with industry standards.

NEW OPENINGS

NH Collection Maldives Reethi Resort Set to Debut After Major Renovations

Minor Hotels announces the reopening of NH Collection Maldives Reethi Resort on 18 December 2025, offering guests a seamless blend of Maldivian tradition and contemporary comfort within one of the most prized atolls. Formerly known as Reethi Beach Resort, the island is in the final stages of its six-month renovation and transformation of the storied island retreat into NH Collection Maldives Reethi Resort, revitalising the resort's villas, dining outlets and leisure facilities while preserving the lush island's natural beauty.

NH Collection Maldives Reethi Resort sits within the Baa Atoll, a protected UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, accessible by a 35-minute seaplane flight from Velana International Airport. Hanifaru Bay, renowned for manta rays, whale sharks and turtles, is less than 20 minutes away.

NH Collection Reethi offers 105 beach

and overwater villas, thoughtfully crafted to blend traditional Maldivian charm and modern comfort. Guests selecting the resort's Beach Villas can expect stays in harmony with nature, waking up to stunning ocean views and direct beach access steps away from their villa. Newly added to the resort's offering are sixteen villas with pools, giving guests the option of a private plunge pool at their doorstep. On the north side of the island are NH Collection Reethi's Overwater Villas. Perched above the turquoise lagoon, the villas provide uninterrupted panoramic vistas from their private decks, perfect for soaking up the sun during the day or enjoying pristine stargazing at night.

The resort features a curated selection of food and beverage outlets, with each of the seven venues having its own unique identity. Guests are spoiled for choice at NH Collection Reethi's three restaurants, including Alifaan, the



beachfront grill, where wood flames take centre stage; Kaiyo, an overwater restaurant celebrating the harmony of sea, sky, and Asian culinary artistry; and Jumla, an all-day dining restaurant serving global flavours and island freshness. For light bites and tropical drinks by the resort's pools, guests can swing by Madumaithri at the new beachfront infinity pool or find healthy, family-friendly fare at Aqua Bar next to the main pool. Day slips into night at Atardecer, the sunset beach bar,

accompanied by tapas, cocktails, DJ sets and timeless entertainment.

A hidden gem on the island is Handhuvaru, a rum bar nestled into the landscape and the home of quiet sophistication. Guests seeking exclusive dining experiences can head to the resort's wine cellar for fine dining, where they will embark on refined culinary journeys, or opt for the resort's Adrift private dining experience, featuring the resort's extraordinary al fresco settings.



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South Asian Travel Awards 2025 Honors Excellence in Regional Tourism



The South Asian Travel Awards (SATA), the region's most prestigious platform celebrating excellence in travel, tourism, and hospitality, marked its 9th edition with a spectacular Grand Gala hosted at the Cinnamon Grand Colombo.

This year's gala brought together distinguished guests, eminent tourism authorities, esteemed partners, and industry leaders from across the region. Against the vibrant backdrop of Sri Lanka's culture and heritage, the evening celebrated South Asia's collective spirit of hospitality and innovation.

In a night of recognition and inspiration, 53 Gold Award winners and 113 Silver Award winners were honored across diverse categories, showcasing the very best of Sri Lanka, India, Maldives, Nepal, Bhutan, and Bangladesh. The winners embody not only service excellence and innovation but also the resilience and unity that continue to elevate South Asia's tourism industry to global prominence.

Since its inception in 2016, SATA has grown into one of the most influential brands in the region, endorsed by leading regional and international tourism bodies. The awards program continues to serve as a platform for nations to come together, not in competition, but in celebration of shared triumphs and brilliance.

- A key highlight of the evening was the conferral of the SATA – Faces of South Asia, a tribute to visionary leaders whose lifelong contributions have shaped the region's tourism and hospitality landscape. This year's honorees were:
- **Ms. Nandini Lahe-Thapa** – Retired Senior Director, Nepal Tourism Board, Nepal
 - **Ms. Jyoti Mayal** – Former President, Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI), India
 - **Mr. Mohamed Waheeduddeen** – Chairman, Bandos Island Resort, Republic of Maldives



- **Deshamanya D. Harry S. Jayawardena** – Chairman Emeritus, Aitken Spence PLC, Sri Lanka

The Visitors' Choice Awards, reflecting the voice of global travelers, were among the most anticipated recognitions of the evening. This year's winners included:

- **Leading Adventure Destination** – Maldives
- **Leading Heritage Destination** – Bhutan
- **Leading MICE Destination** – Sri Lanka
- **Leading Wellness Destination** – Sri Lanka

This year's Gold Awards honored the finest in South Asian hospitality, travel, and aviation. Some of the standout winners include:

- **Leading Travel Agent** – Inbound: Aitken Spence Travels (Sri Lanka)
- **Leading Travel Agent** – Outbound: Hayleys Travels Pvt Ltd (Sri Lanka)
- **South Asia's Best General Managers:**
 - **Ahmed Zahir** (Angsana Velavaru, Maldives)
 - **Digvijay Singh** (Conrad Bengaluru, India)
 - **Karthi VK** (Holiday Inn Express Kathmandu Naxal, Nepal)
 - **Khagendra Dahal** (Hotel Tashi Yid-Wong Grand, Bhutan)
 - **Kamal Munasinghe** (Cinnamon Grand Colombo, Sri Lanka)

- **Leading Luxury Resort:** The Ritz-Carlton Maldives, Fari Islands
- **Leading Luxury Hotel:** Shangri-La Colombo, Sri Lanka
- **Most Romantic Resort:** You & Me Maldives
- **Leading Heritage Hotel/Resort:** Zhiwaling Heritage, Bhutan
- **South Asia's Best New Hotel/Resort:** Hilton Kathmandu, Nepal
- **Leading All-Inclusive Resort:** Heritance Aarah, Maldives
- **Leading Wellness & Spa Hotel/Resort:** Heritance Ayurveda, Sri Lanka
- **Leading International Airline:** SriLankan Airlines
- **Leading Tourist Transport Provider (Air):** Trans Maldivian Airways (Pvt) Ltd, Maldives

These awards represent not only operational excellence but also the innovation and cultural richness that define South Asian tourism.

SATA extends heartfelt gratitude to its valued sponsors and partners, whose support has made this celebration of excellence possible:

- **Destination Partner:** Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA)
- **Host Hotel:** Cinnamon Grand Colombo
- **Platinum Partner:** Honda Marine Maldives
- **Gold Partners:** The Hawks Pvt Ltd, Velana International Airport, Allied Insurance Company of the Maldives
- **Silver Partners:** Bizspoke, Renaatus
- **Airline Partner:** SriLankan Airlines
- **Hospitality Partners:**
 - Mandarin Colombo (Sri Lanka)
 - Sheraton Grand Bangalore at Brigade Gateway (India)
 - Andaz Delhi (India)
 - Hulhule Island Hotel (Maldives)
 - Holiday Inn Express Kathmandu Naxal (Nepal)
 - Zhiwaling Heritage (Bhutan)
 - Holiday Inn Dhaka City Centre (Bangladesh)



The SATA 2025 Grand Gala was not just a celebration of winners, but a tribute to the entire region's travel and hospitality fraternity. With shared values of resilience, creativity, and unity, South Asia continues to strengthen its position on the global tourism map. As the curtain falls on another memorable edition, SATA reaffirms its commitment to recognizing excellence and inspiring growth in the years ahead.

GLOBAL TRAVEL MEET 2025

BUILDING BRIDGES FOR VISIT MALAYSIA 2026

A Journey of Discovery, Connection and Collaboration

Held under the theme “Connecting the World through Travel,” Global Travel Meet 2025 gathered **over 600 international buyers, 400 Malaysian sellers, and 100 global media delegates**. The event featured **B2B sessions, destination presentations, and strategic networking programmes**, all designed to strengthen Malaysia’s positioning as a leading tourism hub ahead of **Visit Malaysia Year 2026**. It was a landmark international tourism business event held from **1st to 3rd October 2025** at the **World Trade Centre, Kuala Lumpur**.



YB Datuk Khairul Firdaus Akbar Khan, Deputy Minister of Tourism, Arts & Culture, noted:

“Global Travel Meet 2025 is more than just an event; it is a catalyst for collaboration and innovation as we gear up for Visit Malaysia 2026. The overwhelming participation and energy reflect the strong global confidence in Malaysia’s tourism industry”

• **Key highlight of the Events:**

- **Launching of Tourism Malaysia Calendar of Events 2026, and the SPICE Market Networking Dinner at MITEC.**

A COLLABORATIVE SHOWCASE OF ASIA

With the strong support of **Malaysia Airlines, AirAsia, and Batik Air**, along with associations such as the **Malaysia Inbound Chinese Association (MICA)** and the **Malaysian Indian Tour & Travel Association (MITTA)**, the programme reflected Malaysia’s commitment to sustainable and inclusive tourism.

The familiarization initiative strengthened cross-border partnerships and inspired new narratives about Malaysia’s tourism vibrancy among key South Asian markets. In **2024**, Malaysia welcomed **38.0 million international visitors**, marking a **31.1% increase** over 2023 and surpassing **pre-pandemic 2019 levels by 8.3%**. This upward trend continued into 2025, with **24.5 million international arrivals recorded between January and July**, a **16.8% rise** compared to the same period last year.



FAM TRIP HIGHLIGHTS

The FAM trip showcased Malaysia’s dynamic tourism offerings — from **vibrant cityscapes and cultural icons to eco-tourism and culinary experiences**.

Itinerary Highlights:

- **Kuala Lumpur** : Visits to Batu Caves, Merdeka Square, Central Market, and River of Life.
- **Genting Highlands** : A scenic escape offering leisure and entertainment.
- **Cultural Immersion** : Traditional cooking demo at Rebung Restaurant and Heritage Walking Tour.
- **Malacca Day Tour** : Exploration of the UNESCO-listed Malacca Heritage City.



LOOKING AHEAD TO VISIT MALAYSIA 2026

Tourism Malaysia’s continuous engagement through trade events, media collaboration, and immersive travel experiences aims to achieve **47 million international visitors in 2026**. The success of **Global Travel Meet 2025** and the FAM Trip marks another milestone in the region’s collective journey toward a more connected and sustainable tourism future.

Tourism Malaysia also supports the **Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle (IMT-GT)** initiative, advancing regional collaboration through the **IMT-GT Visiting Year 2023–2025** to promote the subregion as a unified tourism destination.

EVENTS & AWARDS

SITA Holds Aerotech Connect 2025 in the Maldives



SITA held their Aerotech Connect event in the Maldives on 8th September 2025.

The event took place at Barcelo' Nasandhura, unveiling recent developments that will enhance passenger and flight experience in the Maldives.

Being the world's leading specialist in air transport communications and IT, SITA aims to bring their expertise in these fields to make the travelling experience much smoother.

Their increased automation, use of biometrics and AI will be able to compensate for labour shortages. This will improve both turnaround and airport sustainability, preventing airport staff from dealing with a heavy workload while the customers receive the best of care.

Speaking with the media, Mr. Sumesh Patel, the President of SITA Asia Pacific promised to work collaboratively with Velana International Airport (VIA) to take digital transformation to the next step to enhance their services through the use of applications such as AMS and CloudFlex, there will be a Single Cloud system that will manage multiple airports.

These improvements are not only relegated to VIA, but also the resorts in the Maldives. In the event, they demonstrated how the self-check in process will work through online websites for agents and customers.

SITA has been in service for the past 76 years since its beginning in 1949. There are 4,900 staff operating globally, with over 2,500 customers onboard along with 410 airlines and airports.



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EVENTS & AWARDS

MATI Hosts the National Tourism Day Gala 2025



The Maldives Association of Tourism Industry (MATI) hosted the National Tourism Day Gala 2025 at Kurumba Maldives, gathering MATI members, government officials, and tourism industry stakeholders in celebration of the National Tourism Day of Maldives.

The evening commenced with a welcome reception and networking session, followed by a special segment dedicated to honouring the legacy of the late Mr. Mohamed Umar Maniku, the former Chairman of MATI, who was also one of the founding members of the association.

Attendees were then taken on a journey through time with a presentation on “The Story of Maldivian Tourism”, highlighting the

growth and achievements of the industry over the past five decades.

Key remarks were delivered by the Vice Chairman of MATI, Mr. Hussain Afeef and the Minister of Tourism and Environment, Hon. Thoriq Ibrahim, who emphasized the importance of sustainable development and the continued collaboration between the public and private sectors. The program also featured remarks by MATI Vice Chairman, Mr. Salah Shihab, who reflected on the industry’s resilience and aspirations for the future.

The evening culminated in a dinner reception that provided additional networking opportunities for attendees.

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IN THE NEWS

Visit Maldives Launches the Maldives Book of Records



Visit Maldives has officially launched the Maldives Book of Records, a first-of-its-kind national initiative celebrating the country's natural wonders, cultural heritage, and extraordinary achievements. Unveiled on National Tourism Day 2025, the project introduces a new way for travellers to experience the Maldives through its extremes, milestones, and remarkable stories.

The Maldives, long celebrated for its turquoise lagoons, coral reefs, and luxury hospitality, is now broadening its identity as a destination of exploration and accomplishment. Through the Book of Records, the nation is being positioned not only as a paradise of beauty but also as a stage for remarkable discoveries. The initiative will document and promote records ranging from the largest lagoon and the oldest mosque to the tallest monument and the deepest dive point in Maldivian waters. Each record becomes a story and a living invitation for travellers to see the country through fresh eyes.

For visitors, this initiative opens new pathways of discovery. A trip to the Maldives will no longer be defined solely by sun and sand, but by the opportunity to stand at the highest monument, visit the oldest structure of worship, or dive into the most striking depths of its atolls. The Maldives Book of Records transforms exploration into a meaningful experience by blending culture, adventure, heritage, and environmental appreciation, while encouraging travel beyond resorts to local islands, historic sites, and hidden natural treasures.

More than a catalogue of facts, the Book of Records is also a call to action. Both locals and tourists will be invited to attempt and document new records in fields such as sports, marine exploration, culture, environmental sustainability, and the arts. Each successful entry will become part of the national tourism narrative, offering visitors the chance not only to witness history but also to make it.

"The Maldives Book of Records represents a new chapter in how we tell our story as a destination," said Ibrahim Shiuree, CEO and Managing Director of Visit Maldives Corporation. "It celebrates our diversity, our people, and our achievements, while inviting the world to experience the Maldives in ways that are inspiring, interactive, and uniquely memorable. This is tourism that connects discovery with legacy."

Looking ahead, the Book of Records will continue to evolve as new achievements are recognised and new stories are written. Each addition will keep the Maldives dynamic, giving visitors endless reasons to return and explore the nation's many dimensions, from its living culture and breathtaking landscapes to its spirit of innovation and adventure.

With this bold step, Visit Maldives invites the world to discover the country not just as a destination but as a place where records are made, where history lives, and where every visitor can become part of a legacy.

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IN THE NEWS

Atmosphere Core Hosts Top Indian Travel Partners at OZEN RESERVE BOLIFUSHI

International hospitality company Atmosphere Core recently welcomed leading travel partners from India for an exclusive Appreciation Event at OZEN RESERVE BOLIFUSHI, held from 25 to 27 September 2025. Spanning three days, the event provided an opportunity for trade partners to engage directly with Atmosphere Core's corporate leadership, sales directors, and general managers of the island resorts.

The programme combined Maldivian warmth with immersive experiences, from a traditional Boduberu welcome and sunset cocktails at OZAR, to a grand beachside extravaganza under the stars. Delegates also enjoyed curated activities and a prestigious awards evening at the SANGU BEACH, where 14 top-performing partners were recognised for their outstanding contributions: AV DMC, Bingo Holidays, Island Hopper, Island Life Travel, ISHULL DMC, Krisia Holidays, Luxury Island Getaways, My Value Travel, One Above Global, Ottila International, Tatabye Maldives Pvt Ltd, The Luxe Connections, TravClan, and Youngistan Travellers.

Mr. Michel Politano, Senior Vice President Commercial, Atmosphere



Core, said, "This event was a gesture of gratitude to our partners in India for their continuous efforts in a highly competitive environment. It was also a powerful reminder of the Atmosphere Core DNA, our trade-friendly approach, the reliability of our brands, our generous Holiday Plan concepts that

go much further than a regular all-inclusive stay, and the flawless delivery of the Joy of Giving philosophy by our resort teams".

The gathering concluded with a gala dinner accompanied by live music, leaving guests with lasting memories

of the renowned 'Joy of Giving' hospitality. By bringing together partners who share in the company's key values, the event reinforced Atmosphere Core's dedication to delivering innovative experiences and fostering relationships built on trust, brand reliability, and mutual respect.

Ooredoo Maldives Partners with Maldives Immigration to Conduct 'Mastering Customer Service' Training



Ooredoo Maldives, leveraging its expertise as the country's first and only

ISO-certified Contact Center, successfully partnered with Maldives

Immigration to conduct a comprehensive training program titled Mastering Customer Service. Held from 13th to 18th September 2025, the program focused on empowering frontline officers with essential skills to deliver outstanding customer experiences.

Conducted across six batches, the training was tailored specifically to the needs of Maldives Immigration, with a total of 160 officers participating. The sessions emphasized service excellence, effective communication, and strategies to create a strong service-first culture within the organization.

Ooredoo Maldives believes that

knowledge grows when shared. As the only ISO-certified Contact Center in the country, the company remains committed to helping others build the expertise and confidence required to deliver excellent customer service. It was a privilege for Ooredoo Maldives to extend this knowledge to Maldives Immigration and support their officers in strengthening their skills.

Through initiatives such as this, Ooredoo Maldives continues to reinforce its commitment to supporting national institutions, enhancing customer service standards, and contributing to the broader vision of a Digital Maldives.

IN THE NEWS

Blue Lagoon: Redefining Luxury Living in the Maldives



A new era of luxury living begins in Hulhumalé with the launch of Blue Lagoon Luxury Residences, developed by Varindera Constructions International Limited (VCIL), part of the VCL Group. Following the successful completion of FDC's Aman Dhoadhi Towers, the group now aims to set a new benchmark in Maldivian residential luxury.

Designed by renowned architect Hafeez Contractor, Blue Lagoon is one of the country's largest residential projects, combining island serenity with sophisticated urban living. The development features two 18-storey towers — Coral and Pearl, offering semi-furnished, cross-ventilated homes with spacious decks, smart-home

technology, and sunrise-to-sunset views.

Residents will enjoy over 35,000 sq. ft. of amenities, including a 15,000 sq. ft. clubhouse, gym, family entertainment centre, theatre, multipurpose halls, daycare, and garden areas. A 24,000 sq. ft. rooftop will feature jogging tracks, cabanas, BBQ zones, and the Maldives'

largest rooftop swimming pool.

Blue Lagoon also introduces the Blue Lagoon Arcade, the nation's first open-mall concept, complete with retail outlets, restaurants, and play areas — creating a vibrant community hub.

With over 175 completed projects across India, Mauritius, and the Maldives, VCL Group brings its trusted legacy of quality and innovation to this landmark coastal development in Hulhumalé Phase II, offering panoramic lagoon and ocean views.

Construction of Blue Lagoon is set to begin by December 2025, with concept drawings already approved by HDC. The project is among the fastest-selling luxury developments in the Maldives.

Contact details:

+ 960 9532525 | bluelagoon@vclgroup.in | www.bluelagoon.mv



BON APPÉTIT

Green-Coated Lamb Rack With Zucchini Cannelloni



Brief Introduction of the Chef

Chef Sadun's professional culinary journey in Sheraton Maldives Full Moon Resort & Spa began in 2016 as a Commis I at Sea Salt – the resort's fine dining restaurant specializing in Italian seafood cuisine. Through his dedication and passion for cooking, he was promoted to Demi Chef de Partie in 2019, and by December 2024, he rose to the role of Junior Sous Chef, now overseeing both Sea Salt and Kakuni Hut, the resort's Tex-Mex dining outlet.

Before joining Sheraton Maldives, Chef Sadun honed his skills at renowned establishments, such as Hilton Colombo, Cinnamon Bey Beruwala, and Galle Face Hotel Colombo. His talent has been recognized with several accolades, including a Bronze Award at the Hotel Asia Exhibition and International Culinary Challenge in the Hot Cooking: Seafood category, and a Silver Award at the Food and Hospitality Asia – Maldives in the Lamb: Hot Cooking category.

Chef Sadun drew inspiration from the vibrant, fresh flavors of the Mediterranean and the spirit of Ramadan, a time for family, reflection, and sharing special meals. The Green-Coated Lamb Rack with Zucchini Cannelloni combines the rich, savory essence of lamb with a refreshing herbal crust and delicate zucchini filling, offering a perfect balance of indulgence and lightness. The dish embodies the joy of celebrating togetherness during Ramadan, with each bite delivering layers of flavor and texture, from the aromatic lamb jus to the creamy goat cheese and sun-dried tomato filling.

INGRIDENTS :

- 1 rack of lamb (4 ribs each)
- 50g breadcrumbs (lightly toasted for extra crunch)
- 3g fresh parsley leaves (finely chopped for a burst of color and flavor)
- 1kg lamb trimmings (perfect for a rich, savory jus)
- 25g onion (diced for aromatic depth)
- 25g carrot (chopped to add a subtle sweetness)
- 1 head of garlic (roasted for a mellow, nutty flavor)
- 1 sprig of fresh thyme (for an earthy herbaceous note) • Velvety sweet potato purée infused with a hint of vanilla (for a creamy, slightly sweet complement to the lamb)

STUFFING:

- 65g fresh diced zucchini
- 30kg pitted Kalamata olives
- 30g tangy sun-dried tomatoes
- 2g crushed fresh basil
- 30g creamy goat cheese
- 20g grated Parmesan
- 8 blanched zucchini slices
- 2 unpeeled roasted garlic cloves

METHOD:

Lamb:

- Carefully debone the lamb racks, trimming off excess fat. Scrape the bones clean for presentation and set the racks aside.

Green Herb Coating:

- In a blender, combine the breadcrumbs with fresh parsley leaves. Blend until you achieve a fine, vibrant green mixture. Set aside.

Lamb Jus:

- Sauté the lamb trimmings in a hot pan until browned. Add the diced onion, carrot, and whole garlic cloves. Stir in the thyme and pour in just enough water to cover the ingredients. Let it simmer gently for about 6 hours. Once cooked, strain the jus and reduce it until it reaches a rich, thick consistency.

Zucchini Cannelloni:

- Prepare the filling by mixing the diced zucchini, Kalamata olives, sun-dried tomatoes, crushed basil, goat cheese, and grated Parmesan. Season to taste and refrigerate until firm.
- On a piece of plastic wrap, neatly overlap the blanched zucchini slices. Place the chilled filling on top and roll tightly into a cannelloni shape.

Cooking the Lamb:

- In a sauté pan, sear the lamb racks in butter until evenly browned. Transfer to a 180°C oven and roast for 10 minutes for a perfect rare doneness.
- Once cooked, cut each rack into 2 portions and roll each piece in the prepared green herb coating for a fresh, flavorful crust.

To Serve:

- Plate the lamb alongside the zucchini cannelloni, and drizzle with the rich lamb jus. Pair with the velvety sweet potato purée infused with vanilla for a beautifully balanced dish.

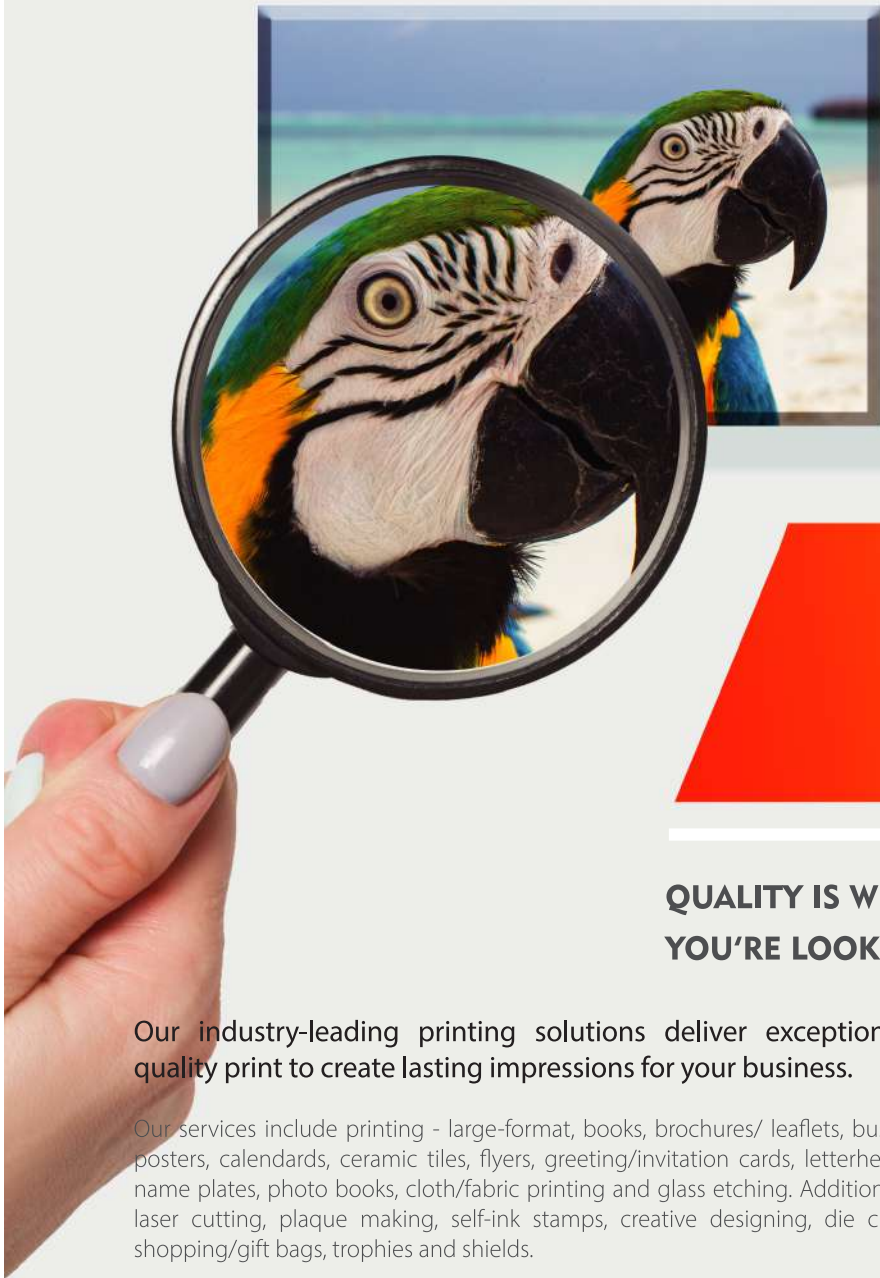


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Frankly Speaking

Tourism remains the Maldives’ largest and most sustainable revenue stream, heavily dependent on healthy marine biodiversity. How could the decision to allow shark fishing potentially impact nature-based tourism industries such as diving, snorkeling, and marine safaris that thrive on the presence of sharks?



Dave Murray
Managing Director
PADI EMEA

We are concerned by the government’s consideration to re-open tuna long-line fisheries targeting overfished bigeye and yellowfin tuna, allowing shark bycatch. Maldives’ shark sanctuary status brings vast economic benefits through dive tourism, making it a top global destination for shark diving. Allowing shark fishing, even as bycatch, would risk major losses to tourism. Studies show shark protection has boosted tourism demand by 15%, adding around US\$6 million annually. Conversely, negative perceptions could reduce demand by 56%, costing over US\$24 million yearly. This move also contradicts Maldives’ commitments at CITES CoP19, where strong shark conservation support was championed.



Fayyaz Ibrahim
Founder
Divers Lodge Maldives

I wish to comment broader than only shark fishing. If it’s properly regulated and implemented properly, any kind of fishing does not harm the tourism industry. Over exploitation with the aim of maximum profit does harm.

It is the same as the environment being exploited for tourism development too. The lagoons being reclaimed, the hypocritic EIA’s and the destruction of reefs in the process. Once the islands are done the owners become environmentalists.

A natural island allocated for tourism is also exploited for expansion and many other environmental destruction goes on. So just imagine a lagoon being reclaimed. It’s very one-sided and hypocritical. Nothing is properly regulated, implemented or even prosecuted. If you think broadly it is frustrating.



Donatella Telli
Albatros Top Boat

The Maldives is in FREEFALL! Between the reefs being destroyed for resort land reclamation, the various coral bleaching events that have caused high coral mortality, we now also risk the Chinese fishing all the sharks (because that’s exactly what will happen!) in just one week, and then we’ll hit rock bottom!

There is already a lot of concern from tour operators, who write to me every day. Allowing shark fishing in the Maldives could have serious negative consequences for nature-based tourism. Sharks are one of the main attractions for divers, snorkelers, and marine safari visitors, as their presence signals a healthy ecosystem and offers a unique wildlife experience. If shark populations decline due to fishing, tourists may choose other destinations where marine biodiversity is better preserved. This would reduce tourism revenue, harm local communities that depend on it, and damage the country’s international reputation as a sustainable travel destination. In the long term, the economic loss from fewer tourists could far outweigh the short-term profit gained from shark fishing.



Hussain Rasheed Sendi
Vice President
Indian Ocean Divers Association
(IODA)

As a deepwater, bottom-dwelling species, the gulper shark is not typically found on shallow coral reefs. Their depth preference (hundreds of meters) makes them unlikely to be associated with reef edges in shallow zones.

They are more associated with outer continental slopes, drop-offs, or deep shelf areas rather than small reef structures. I absolutely agree with you that both Fuvahmulah and Hulhumale’ alone make a revenue of 5m.

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