

# The islandchief

travel news

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## Brawing the Blue



**EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW**

with

**MOHAMED RAAIDH**

Managing Director,  
Maldives Integrated Tourism  
Development Corporation (MITDC)

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# Publisher's Note



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Dear Readers,

Although we're still in the midst of a global health crisis, many industries and economies are on the edge - surviving and thriving. There's a lot of hope and optimism that we're in the final stretches of this pandemic that forced us to all to think in a different way, and it has provided all of us with new opportunities to improve the services we provide. So, whilst 2020 is a year none of us will look back fondly on, 2021 was the year in which we all kick-started our society again and together embraced a new exciting future. A testament to this was the phenomenal success of EXPO 2020 in the first few months of the exhibition. It's fair to say the dark days are now behind us, and whilst life will never return to what it once was, at least now we can look ahead to the future with great vigor, excitement, and enthusiasm.

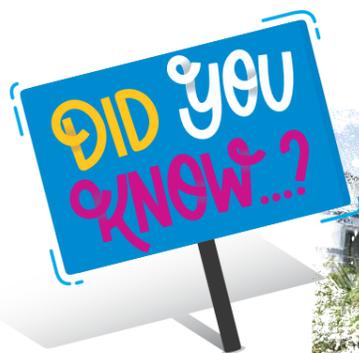
On the front cover of February's edition, we felt it would be remiss of us if we didn't pay homage to "Savaadheetha Dhathuru", Maldives' first international yacht rally, organized by The Maldives Integrated Tourism Development Corporation (MITDC). We sat down with Mohamed Raaidh, Managing Director of the Maldives Integrated Tourism Development Corporation to hear more about his passionate project to introduce heritage tourism in the Maldives - in a way it includes the heritage sites across the nation and the culture of Maldives.

In addition to this, Chef Diego from Hard Rock Hotel Maldives shares us the recipe for Tuna Tiradito on page 22. That's not all. With the introduction of home-stay tourism in the Maldives for the very first time in 2022, we also have stimulating opinions from the industry experts on page 23.

So, make sure you read every page and stay tuned to changes as they happen and rediscover the pleasure of reading. Enjoy!

**Have a wonderful and fruitful year ahead!**

**The Islandchief Team**



## CORAL STONE MOSQUES

One of the mosques that remain on the island is a beautiful ancient coral stone mosque constructed by Al-Sultan Ibrahim Mudzhiruddine in December 1701, the old Friday Mosque of Ihavandhoo. Among the hand-carved historic tombstones at this mosque's cemetery is the resting place of some members of Al-Ghaazee Hassan Rannabandeyri Kilegefaanu's family, along with the tomb of Kudabandeyri Muhammed Thakurufaanu's son, Al Wazeer Muhammed as well. This mosque also consists of an ancient coral stone well as well. Another ancient mosque, the one that's the oldest at the island, is a coral stone mosque constructed over 327 years ago. This mosque consists of some of the most amazing ancient lacquer work still remaining from the history of the island.



## DISTRIBUTION



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5 UNITED NATIONS AGENCIES

# SriLankan Airlines Partners with American Airlines to Enhance Connectivity Across North America and Europe



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SriLankan Airlines announces that the Airline has re-established a codeshare arrangement with American Airlines in December 2021, which is expected to offer customers enhanced connectivity and travel options across North America and Europe.

This strategic partnership would allow the placement of the SriLankan Airlines'

code on American Airlines' flights to US cities Miami and New York via the Airline's European points in London and Paris; Dallas- Fort Worth via the Airline's hubs in Paris and Frankfurt; and Los Angeles and Chicago via the Airline's hub in London. Of these US cities, Dallas-Fort Worth is a new addition to the SriLankan Airlines' route network, as existing codeshare agreements with

Qatar Airways and Etihad Airways have afforded the Airline's passengers flight options to the rest of the cities via Doha and Abu Dhabi respectively up to now. The SriLankan Airlines route network covers 121 cities in 55 countries with the addition of Dallas-Fort Worth.

Customers of SriLankan Airlines are now able to conveniently book flights to these US cities via Europe across the Airline's sales channels. SriLankan recently resumed flights to Paris and Frankfurt in commensurate with the Airline's commercial strategy to renew its presence in European markets. The Airline is committed to expand its network with the addition of new online destinations, as well as through several recent and planned codeshare partnerships with other airlines.

Richard Nuttall, Acting Chief Executive Officer/Chief Commercial Officer of SriLankan Airlines stated, "We are pleased to reinstate our codeshare partnership with American Airlines as

SriLankan Airlines continues to expand its operations in Europe. This will introduce multiple new sectors and flight options to our growing network and allow our customers the option of convenient connections to several cities in North America via London, Paris or Frankfurt." Anmol Bhargava, VP Global Alliances & Partnerships of American Airlines commented, "We are delighted to re-start our codeshare cooperation with oneworld partner, SriLankan Airways, to better serve customers traveling between Sri Lanka and the United States."

SriLankan Airlines is an award-winning airline with a firm reputation as a global leader in service and was the first carrier in the South Asian region to receive the 'Diamond' rating from the Airline Passengers Experience Association (APEX) and SimpliFlying, a standard received for the extra safety measures and comprehensive hygiene precautions adhered to since the onset of the global pandemic.



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## ACROSS THE SKIES

## Maldivian Orders its First ATR Aircraft



The national airline of the Maldives, Island Aviation Services Ltd (Maldivian), and ATR have announced the signing of a contract for the purchase of the airline's first ATR aircraft: two ATR 72-600 and one ATR 42-600. The three aircraft will be delivered in 2022.

The ATR 72-600 and ATR 42-600 will benefit from the new PW127XT engines, offering 3% reduction in fuel consumption and a 20% reduction in maintenance costs, along with the ability to use Sustainable Aviation Fuels (SAF). Just as it is for the aircraft manufacturer, sustainable development is a major concern for the airline. ATR aircraft already boast the lowest fuel consumption and CO2 emissions of

all the regional aircraft with ATR 72-600 aircraft consuming up to 40% less fuel than similarly sized regional jets.

Maldivian is joining forces with ATR to contribute to the economic development of the archipelago. This initiative will complement the Government of Maldives' air mobility policy and allow Maldivian to offer enhanced connectivity across the Maldives.

Mohamed Mihad, Managing Director of Maldivian, said: "We are pleased to take this next step in our expansion plans with ATR. We believe the new generation of ATR aircraft with the XT engines offer something we have been looking for in our fleet

modernization, taking a step towards sustainability while keeping an eye on the operating costs as well as enhancing the cabin modernity and passenger comfort."

Stefano Bortoli, ATR's Chief Executive Officer, stated: "Despite the current pandemic, operators are looking to the future, and this contract is a strong symbol of the resilience of the aviation sector. Our aircraft have proven their reliability by linking up the islands of many archipelagos for almost four decades; we welcome Maldivian as a new customer and we are proud to contribute sustainably to the modernisation and expansion of the flag carrier of the Maldives."

## GoAir becomes Go First, embraces the Ultra-Low-Cost Airline approach

Go Air, one of the fastest growing airlines in India revamped to become Go First.

As the Indian travelers have changed; seeking speed, convenience, and yet demanding value - Go First is determined to be part of the socio-economic momentum to chart its next phase of growth.

From May 2021, Go First have been embracing ultra-low-cost airline model. With the youngest average fleet among Indian LCC carriers\*, majority of which are A320 Neos, high-density seating, single aircraft type across its fleet, Go First is positioned to get ahead of its peer group by operating with ultra-low-cost\*. And it is this competitive advantage that enables it to offer its customers a combination of ultra-competitive fares and a safe flying experience.

To communicate this change, Go First's new identity is complete with contemporary graphics and a bolder, brighter blue. With this change, Go First is poised for its next phase of growth as an ultra-low-cost carrier. The Airline is in the process of transitioning all its operations under this new brand.

Voyages Maldives is the appointed General Service Agent (GSA) for Go First in the Maldives. Currently, Go First operates flights to Maldives with direct routes

from the 4 prominent cities in India; Mumbai, Delhi, Bangalore and Hyderabad.

Commenting on this brand restage, Vice Chairman, Ben Baldanza said, "I am excited by the revamp of GoAir to Go First. India is a fast-developing airline market. Consumers in India are hugely value conscious but are quite demanding when it comes to flying experience. The combinations of attractive airfares, a squeaky-clean flying experience, well sanitized flights and on time performance is what Go First is designed to deliver. And that is exactly at the core of our brand and service. At Go First, our Consumers Come First.

Kaushik Khona, CEO, Go First had this to say. "Go First has stayed resilient during the really tough times of the past 15 months. Even as the times continue to be extraordinary, Go First sees opportunities ahead. This rebranding reflects our confidence in the brighter tomorrow. The Go First Team will strive to deliver the brand and make "You Come First" a reality."

Go First, previously known as GoAir, is a 15-year-old airline that has topped the chart for best OTP for 15 months in a row till Nov'19.\* Go First, has won several Awards and Recognition over the past several years and some of the prestigious awards for 2019 and 2020.

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G8 4032	Malé	Bengaluru	16:40	19:15	Daily Ex Wed & Sun
G8 1532	Bengaluru	Malé	12:50	14:35	Wed & Sun
G8 1532	Bengaluru	Malé	13:55	15:40	Daily Ex Wed & Sun
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YOU COME FIRST



# Emirates Aircraft Circles Around Burj Khalifa to Put Expo 2020 Dubai on Top of World's Travel Agenda



Keeping with Dubai's 'nothing is impossible' spirit, Emirates is soaring up and around the Burj Khalifa for another edition of its viral ad campaign, this time taking it one spectacular step further with the masterful addition of the iconic Expo 2020 Dubai A380. Emirates hit the global headlines and social media feeds of millions in August 2021 when it took its brand message to new heights atop the Burj Khalifa.

This time, the brave stuntwoman is standing at the pinnacle of the Burj Khalifa by Emaar once again, holding up message boards with an invitation to visit the world's greatest show, Expo 2020 Dubai, on the iconic Emirates A380. She then gestures to her 'friend', the eye-catching Emirates A380 wearing the Expo 2020 Dubai livery, which gracefully soars in the background as she stands firmly on the spire of the world's tallest building. The ad also features dynamic aerial views of Dubai and its iconic skyline, and culminates in a flypast over the impressive Al Wasl dome at the Expo 2020 Dubai site.

Sir Tim Clark, President, Emirates Airline said: "Now at the halfway mark of its six-month run, the

excitement and momentum around Expo 2020 Dubai remain strong. Our latest campaign boldly carries the Expo message and invites people to come and experience what is truly the world's greatest show. There is nowhere else right now that offers the raft of attractions, top-class entertainment and music, riveting sports, vibrant country and themed pavilions, a thriving culinary scene and much more – all in one place. Dubai and the Expo are already top attractions and our aim is to give global travellers even more reasons to choose Emirates and Dubai for their upcoming winter and spring holidays."

While the ad looked like it was shot effortlessly, the whole project involved in-depth planning and meticulous execution involving stakeholders across Dubai's aviation eco-system, with a strong focus on safety at every juncture when conducting the low flying manoeuvres.

The carefully choreographed flypast involved the A380 flying at a low altitude of only 2,700 feet, the exact height of Burj Khalifa by Emaar. The aircraft also flew at a very low speed of 145 knots. To put

that into perspective, the average cruising speed of an A380 is around 480 knots. The low speed ensured the aircraft could efficiently and continuously circle around the Burj Khalifa and achieve a tight radius without drifting away. In total, the Emirates A380 circled the Burj Khalifa 11 times to get a right selection of shots for the ad.

The aircraft also appeared as if it was flying very close to the stuntwoman as she was standing on the Burj, when in fact it was over a half a mile away. The new global multi-channel campaign will run in 12 languages, debuting across 19 countries covering TV, cinema, digital and social media platforms. The ad is part of a wider USD \$20 million commitment Emirates has made to help create awareness, generate excitement and ultimately drive more visits to Dubai and Expo 2020 Dubai.

Since Dubai reopened for business and tourism in July 2020, the airline has run close to 15 major global and regional brand and tactical campaigns across 25 countries, starting with its 'Dubai is Open' campaign; its partnership with celebrity powerhouse Chris Hemsworth promoting Expo 2020 Dubai's endless possibilities ahead of the event's opening date; both its "Emirates crew on Burj Khalifa" ads and its latest winter campaign highlighting the plethora of activities Dubai has to offer for travellers seeking to escape the cold. The airline has also promoted Expo 2020 Dubai through a number of global tactical campaigns, including complimentary day passes for every ticket booked, earning Skywards Miles for time spent in Dubai during the Expo period, early bird discounts, family and SME offers, amongst other special promotions.

Running until March 31, 2022, Expo 2020 Dubai brings the world together, hosting spectacular events that have encouraged repeat visitation, as it provides a platform for collaboration, showcasing human advances and the latest in technology, culture, art music, gastronomy, sports and much more, in addition to over 190 country pavilions to see and experience.

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## IN A NUTSHELL

## A Romantic Adventure Like No Other with Finolhu's Upgraded Beach Bubble Experience

Spending the night under the stars in a state-of-the-art Beach Bubble on a secluded private beach in the Maldives is a truly magical bucket list experience for the romantically adventurous travelers. Finolhu reveals an exciting new upgrade to its exclusive Dream Eclipse Experience; with the introduction of its newly upgraded Beach Bubble for guests to take that unique romantic experiences to the stars and beyond.

As the only Bubble on a secluded beach in the Maldives, the Dream Eclipse Experience's newly upgraded bubble now features three connected bubble rooms, with separate space for the bedroom, living room and bathroom. Located along the sandbank from the Crab Shack, away from the main island of the resort gives that undeniable feeling of total seclusion, the new set-up also includes an outdoor bathtub for a romantic al- fresco soak whilst being serenaded by the gentle lapping of the waves on the private beach.

Constructed using state-of-the-art, high tech polyester fabric, the Beach Bubble creates a UV-protected, fully waterproof, climate-controlled cocoon with uninterrupted views of the private tropical beach, the mesmerising ocean and endless sky beyond. The interiors feature custom-fitted wooden floors and bespoke furnishings, including a four-poster bed with the finest linen for an idyllic blend of earthly comfort and heavenly views.

The Dream Eclipse Experience begins with a romantic dinner at sunset served by the personal Bubble Butler who will meet with the guests from the start of the evening picking them up from their villa, and is available on call until checkout the following morning.

After the indulgent romantic dinner enjoyed with a selection of fine wine, continue the evening by gazing at the moon on the telescope and the highlight of the Dream Eclipse



Experience - an unforgettable night under the stars in your private Beach Bubble, a truly magical experience that will take you to the edge of infinity. Upon waking from this dreamlike reverie, a beautiful Maldivian sunrise provides the fantastical backdrop for breakfast right at the water's edge, after which guests will be personally greeted by

and escorted back to the villa by the Bubble Butler.

For fairy-tale honeymoons, surprise proposals or unforgettable anniversary celebrations, Finolhu's Dream Eclipse is an unforgettable experience like no other.

## Canareef Resort Maldives Reopens After Renovation



Canareef Resort Maldives, located in Addu Atoll has announced its resume of operations and reopening after a period of two years.

Canareef Resort Maldives reopened on January 15, 2022, after carrying out some essential renovation works to improve overall product and offerings. In this phase, the resort is opening 142 rooms east of the arrival jetty and reception area. They further inform that out of these 142 rooms, 140 rooms have been booked by its partner; Resort Life Travels. The support extended by Resort Life Travels and their

MD Mr. Shaaz Waleed led to an early opening for the resort ahead of its initial plan to reopen in April 2022.

In addition to the support from Waleed and his team, Canareef Resort highlighted the continuous support received from the Government of the Maldives, especially from Ministry of Tourism and Ministry of Economic Development, who went above and beyond in providing guidance and assistance in facilitating them to meet the reopening date fully prepared.

The resort thanked Mayor of Addu City, Mr. Ali Nizar, for his support and assistance in ensuring that deadlines were met without delay and the management of Gan International Airport and Member of Parliament for Meedhoo Constituency, Rozaina Adam and Member of Parliament for Feydhoo Constituency Mohamed Nihad, for their support in facilitating that all permits and approvals were obtained on time.

Additional support was also received from management of Aims Health Care Pvt Ltd and their General Manager, Ibrahim Didi in ensuring any medical assistance that is to be required at the resort.

Lastly, the resort expressed gratitude towards its wonderful team and owners, for the support and perseverance that they have shown during the period. "They went above and beyond to ensure that work was completed on time." Canareef Resort Maldives further announced that that they will be opening more rooms in the coming days.

The idyllic resort spans an impressive 4.5km in length and is located just south of the Equator. It is easily accessible by a scenic and thrilling 70-minutes fly by a domestic plane from Velana International to Gan International Airport.

IN A NUTSHELL

# Raffles Maldives Meradhoo Introduces Freediving Meditation Course by Bastien Soleil



Freediving is known to be an extreme sport, but on the other hand it can also be a relaxing and beautiful discipline focusing on one's well-being.

Freediving Master Bastien Soleil, has developed a brand-new learning technique which focuses on personal wellbeing through aquatic sensations. An underwater exercise that is accessible to anyone.

In the beautiful and serene waters of Raffles Maldives Meradhoo, Bastien will guide guests to an extraordinary and unique connection to water itself. This course is suited for all levels of divers, no matter how familiar you are with the ocean. It provides an easy yet a breathtaking journey into a whole new world underwater to rediscover oneself.

Experience this once is a lifetime opportunity available only at Raffles Maldives Meradhoo, starting from the February 1 onwards until February 28, 2022.



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## IN A NUTSHELL

## Tennis Coaching by Michaël Llodra at Sun Siyam Iru Fushi

Sun Siyam Iru Fushi has announced tennis lessons with the former professional and highly world-ranked tennis player, Michaël Llodra from 15 to 25 February 2022.

Known for his skilled net play, Llodra has been described as the 'best serve and volleyer in the world' by Essential Tennis and players of note such as two-time French Open finalist Robin Söderling called Llodra's serve "unbelievable and his volleys "the best on the tour".

In a blazing career spanning 15 years, Michaël Llodra have played and won against several of the world's top ten players including current world champion Novak Djokovic. He is also an Olympic silver medalist, finishing 2nd in the 2012 doubles event with partner Jo-Wilfried Tsonga.

Michaël Llodra has won five ATP singles titles and twenty-six men's doubles titles, including three Grand Slam tournaments (the Australian Open in 2003 & 2004, Wimbledon in 2007), three Masters 1000 and a Masters Cup in addition to reaching twenty-seven other finals on the main circuit.

Do not miss out on the phenomenal opportunity to train and learn elite tricks and techniques under the



unrivalled supervision and guidance of one of the top athletes in the world. Join the group sessions or book an exclusive private one-on-one to take your game to the next level.

All classes are to be held on the beautiful outdoor tennis courts of Sun Siyam Iru Fushi against the tropical backdrop of the tall coconut palm trees swaying in the tropical breeze.

Accessible by a scenic 45-minute seaplane journey north of Malé, the beautiful resort of Sun Siyam Iru Fushi is a 52-acre resort set in the limpid waters of Noonu Atoll, and home to 221 beach villas and over water villas where contemporary architecture meets traditional rustic thatched roofs, and modern comforts blend seamlessly into the surrounding nature.

## The Standard, Huruvalhi Maldives Hosts Wellness Practitioner Jang Martthuean



The Standard, Huruvalhi Maldives has welcomed a new wellness practitioner Jang Martthuean to a special residency focused on wellness treatments and yoga therapy.

Visiting as part of the resort's Wellness Residency Programme, Jang will be sharing her knowledge on various wellness treatments;

Chi Nei Tsang, a detoxifying and stimulating massage focusing on the abdomen area, unlocking emotional and energetic blockages stored in the internal organs. Its benefits include relieving stress, improving digestion system.

Crystal Healing with Reiki, using crystal stones on the chakra and use

the hands healing by gentle touch. Reiki is relaxation, assists in the body's natural healing processes, and develops emotional, mental, and spiritual well-being. It is also used to induce deep relaxation, help people relieve emotional stress, and improve overall wellbeing.

Crystal Foot massage focused on the feet and legs by using hands and crystal stones to combine the pressure on reflexology point and meridian line that are connected energetically to specific organs, body parts, as well as improving the energy flow of the body.

Body Alignment Massage, where Jang

combines many years of experience in bodywork and various modalities to customize a massage that is most suitable for you to help align your body and mind back into balance after consultation of your needs.

Hailing from Thailand, Jang has worked in numerous five-star wellness resorts across the world such as the Six Senses Thailand, Jumeirah Vittaveli Maldives and One & Only resort in Australia during her spa journey spanning over 20 years. She has consistently been the top most requested spa practitioner wherever she goes. Jang's three-month wellness residency will end on February 28, 2022.



IN A NUTSHELL

# New Luxury Two-Bedroom Villas at Fushifaru Maldives



Fushifaru Maldives expands its offering with the addition of Beach Duplex Villas and a Premium Beach Duplex Villa to provide more choice of superlative accommodation.

Located on the eastern side of the island with unmatched view of the sunrise, the two Beach Duplex Villas and the Premium Beach Duplex Villa boast the view of the idyllic, aquamarine lagoon of the Indian Ocean. These impeccable villas have

been carefully positioned to provide maximum privacy and offer guests the chance to be enchanted by the beauty of the Maldivian flora and fauna in the privacy of their own villa.

The sprawling two-bedroom Premium Beach Duplex and Beach Duplex Villas are connected by a lavish living room, and the seamlessly fusing tropical outdoor setting allows guests to relax, sip cocktails on the private wooded deck, take a plunge in the

private pool or simply laze on the terrace while soaking up the sunshine.

Understanding the industry etiquettes, embedding himself in the culture of it was a novel experience to young Hassan. Amongst the many mistakes and learnings, he relentlessly pursued his love for hospitality. His approach was methodical; a myriad of workshops, trainings and creating connections and relationships with hoteliers across the world inspired him. "It gave me a sense of purpose, making me better at what I love to do", Hassan says with a hint of nostalgia in his voice.

Ideal for families and group of friends, these spacious beachfront villas can accommodate up to 6 adults or 4 adults and 4 children aged up to 12 years. In addition, one of its kind family retreat; the Premium Beach Duplex Villa exudes tasteful contemporary decor with Maldivian accents and offers a private gated entrance, outdoor bathrooms, beach Sala with a swing and a living area complete with wine cellar and decadent amenities.

Fushifaru Maldives is synonymous with exceptional service, unique guest experience and outstanding hospitality and the resort hopes to inspire more travelers to visit them through this new villa addition.



**FUELING THE NATION**



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## MOVERS &amp; SHAKERS



## Furaveri Maldives Appoints Ibad Abdulla as Resort Manager

Furaveri Maldives has appointed Ibad Abdulla as new Resort Manager. Ibad brings over 7 years of experience in the tourism and hospitality industry. In his new role, Ibad will be overseeing operations of the resort along with General Manager, Mohamed Hilmy.

Starting off his career as a Reservation Assistant at Paradise Resort Maldives in

2012, Ibad climbed up the leadership ladder, having worked as Assistant Food and Beverage Manager to Executive Assistant Manager over a span of 4 years.

Ibad holds a Bachelor's degree in International Hospitality Management at Taylor's University, Malaysia and a Master of Business Administration (MBA) certificate from the University of the West of England.

Furaveri Maldives is a tropical 23-hectare natural and un-reclaimed island situated in the exotic Raa Atoll near "Hanifaru Bay" a UNESCO biosphere reserve. This sanctuary is just a mere 45-minute scenic seaplane ride from Velana International airport. The very spacious 168 villas offer uninterrupted privacy and indulgence.

## Siyam World, Maldives Appoints Adam Clive Lockwood as New Director of Culinary

Chef Adam Clive Lockwood has joined Siyam World, Maldives as new Director of Culinary to oversee the overall food and beverage development as well as craft innovative menus that truly reflect the 24hrs premium all-inclusive dining experiences at the all-embracing five-star all-inclusive island resort.

Of multi-national descent, Chef Adam graduated from The University of Huddersfield in England. A culinary expert and a seasoned professional with an impressive background and comes with over

25 years of experience in the industry. Adam has worked onboard seven different vessels in the fleet at Celebrity Cruises under Apollo Ship Chandlers hotel operations.

Additionally, Chef Adam has worked around the globe with Cunard, The Apollo Group, Norwegian Cruise Line, Carnival Australia, Costa Crociere S.p.A., sea chefs at jobs auf Kreuzfahrtschiffen, MSC Cruises, Holland America Line, and ACL Culinary Consultancy holding various titles such as Executive Chef, Corporate Executive Chef, Traveling Culinary Manager, Culinary Consultant, and Food &

Beverage Director. He is known for his creatively-prepared dishes and unique interpretations of local and international recipes.

Chef Adam says: "I'm thrilled to be part of such a progressive island concept and unique property here in the Maldives, along with its outstanding dining outlets. My aim is to bring more distinctive culinary experiences to Siyam World that are in line with the resorts experiential never-seen-before ethos."

The General Manager of Siyam World, Abdulla



Thamheed says: "We are extremely pleased that Chef Adam has joined us and welcoming him with open arms into the Siyam World family. I trust that his extensive portfolio of experience will shine as he settles into his new role."



## Visha Mahir and Sanjay Maniku Appointed as Chief Operating Officers of Universal Resorts Management (URM)

Universal Resorts Management (URM) has announced the appointment of Visha Mahir and Sanjay Maniku as Chief Operating Officers of the company.

Visha brings over 20 years of experience in the Maldives tourism industry and has served as Executive Director at Universal Enterprises since 2002. Sanjay has served as Executive Director for Development and Joint Ventures at Universal Enterprises since 2004. "With these appointments, we are putting

Universal on the path to continue our success over the last 50 years into the next decades. Visha and Sanjay have a deep passion for the hospitality industry and will ensure that our resorts continue to deliver the highest levels of service and delight our guests at all levels," said Universal Chairman

Mohamed Umar Maniku. "They will make sure that our associates have great opportunities for career development and that we continue to evolve our operations and adopt international best practices across all our resorts".

## Ida Ayu Nyoman Widiaptini Appointed at Conrad Maldives Rangali Island as Director of Spa

Conrad Maldives Rangali Island has assigned Ida Ayu Nyoman Widiaptini as its new Director of Spa as the notable twin-island resort gets ready for its fabulous relaunch. The property is essential for Conrad Hotels and Resorts, one of Hilton's worldwide lavish hotel brands.

An accomplished spa pioneer and health master, Ida will be liable for rejuvenating the hotel's comprehensive wellbeing program, including supervising tasks for two unique spa experiences – The Spa Retreat situated at the family island, Rangali-Finolhu and The Over-Water Spa at the couples island, Rangali Island – as the award winning Conrad Maldives Rangali Island turns the page to compose its next section after a multi-million-dollar renovation.

The extensive multi-year makeover further elevates the resort's health and wellbeing offering, including the revamped Over-Water Spa, which offers a luxurious sanctuary 100-meters into the Indian Ocean and caters to all demands, from soulful meditation to absolute therapeutic pampering.

Originally from Bali, Ida brings over 20 years of extravagance spa experience and knowledge to the job, having first taken in her art at the Banyan Tree Bintan in Indonesia, prior to advancing to progressively senior jobs with the brand in Bahrain and Bali; sharpening her skills in all aspects of spa activities, management and the operations. In 2011, she got back to Banyan Tree Bintan as Director of Spa, before making the move back to Bali with Six Senses in 2017.

With a solid eye for detail and aptitude in Balinese healing methods and remedial practices, Ida will lead a group of 17 wellness experts from around the world to make a moving and diverse wellbeing project to further improve the experience for visitors during their visit.

Ida said, "I am thrilled to be joining Conrad Maldives Rangali Island at such an exciting time for the resort, the team and guests," she said. "Its pioneering approach has set the standard for luxury hospitality in the Maldives for almost 25 years, so to have the opportunity to be part of the next phase of its story is a real honour."

Carla Puverel, General Manager, Conrad Maldives Rangali Island, said, "We are delighted to welcome Ida as Director of Spa



at a really key time for us as we head into the final stage of what has been an extensive, island-wide, transformation, including reimagined spacious water villas, reinvigorated culinary venues and innovative guest experiences. Moving forward, it's important that we continue to push boundaries and seek out new firsts; Ida has shown a genuine passion to embrace the spirit of innovation and I can't wait to see how that translates into memorable experiences for our guests."



# Brawing the Blue

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

with

**MOHAMED RAAIDH**

Managing Director,  
Maldives Integrated Tourism  
Development Corporation (MITDC)



“ I would like to see a generation of youth growing up in their native islands, where they will work and earn through these integrated tourism facilities and achieve economic freedom. ”

Ahead of Maldives' first international yacht rally to mark the 50th anniversary of the Maldivian tourism industry, we sat down for an exclusive interview with the man behind the ambitious project, Mohamed Raaidh, Managing Director of Maldives Integrated Tourism Development Corporation (MITDC). He's also kindly provided a journey of a mix that encapsulates everything the "Savaadheetha Dhathuru" and MITDC is about.

**In January 2019, you were appointed as the Managing Director of MITDC, a 100% Maldivian Government SOE mandated to support and to foster the development and growth of the mid-market segment of the Tourism Industry. What are some defining moments or pivotal points from your career in the past three years that reflects on stepping into your current role?**

Alhamdulillah. I am honored that I got this opportunity to serve the nation. I am very thankful to Former President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom and Ahmed Faris Maumoon, leaders of my party, Maldives Reform Movement (MRM), and His Excellency President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih for my appointment, after reviewing my track record.

The government gave me the opportunity to take part in discussions of tourism policy formulation, and key stakeholder meetings with the tourism industry from the very beginning of 2019 and has been a very enlightening experience for me.

What I noticed was the deficiency in developing tourism products for the mid-market segment. There is a huge demand for our luxury tourism. Private jets come to Maldives filled with VIPs & CIPs. However, it tells a different story when regular airlines fly to the Maldives with their first class and business class full, but with many empty seats in

the economy class—the bulk of the carrier. And then, there is a significant income disparity gap within the Maldivian society too. These are reasons for fostering middle income earners, as well as mid-markets tourist facilities in Maldives. The government has a vision to close that gap, for which MITDC has a crucial role to play.

The past two years of the pandemic was challenging. But I was very inspired by the leadership of the government and the bold decision to open up our borders in July 2020. The government was able to strategically and effectively manage COVID-19. Simultaneously, we managed to keep in touch with investors, formulate new policies, and even execute many projects during the pandemic.

My defining moments were the visits and meetings with local councils of across the Maldives, and consulting them on planning the areas for integrated tourism in their islands. There's a lot more than just moments. A revolutionary amendment was brought to the Tourism Act. The famous 10th Amendment is, what we believe, the redefinition of Maldives Tourism. Several new products were recognized by the law, including integrated tourism, private islands, real-estate tourism, a revision on tourism land rent, and many

more. I, in my capacity as the Managing Director of Maldives Integrated Tourism Development Corporation, tirelessly advocated and lobbied to include a chapter on Integrated Tourism in the 10th Amendment. The 10th Amendment to the Tourism Act was gazetted in December 2020 with these revisions and new additions.

**Some industry experts believe that Maldives has to go beyond its "Sunny Side of Life" strategy to make it appealing as a contemporary, modern, 365-day destination. If you were to suggest a strategy, what would you propose to promote a newer and unique image of the Maldives?**

Maldives' "Sunny Side of Life" brand has been very successful, and millions of dollars have been invested to the brand over the years. Fifty years into tourism, and our brand's value is, I can confidently say, over five billion dollars. Where else in the world is an island country that experiences tropical sunshine with temperatures between 27-32 degrees Celsius for the greatest number of days, and perfectly clear visibility other than the Maldives? Of course, there are people with opinions pushing for enhancing and modernizing the brand, or even advocating for a complete rebrand.

On this note, I believe the current leadership of MPRC is doing it artfully, with a significant touch of

local talent. They are doing a magnificent job across the globe in promoting the Maldives. We have won World's Leading Destination award for two consecutive years, for the first time in our history. What more should we say about the success of our brand?

***You have plans to hold Maldives' First International Yacht Rally, "Savaadheetha Dhathuru" in February on the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the Maldivian Tourism industry. Please tell us a few words about your ambitious Sailing Event.***

First of all, Maldives has 3,000 years of culture and history to showcase to the world. But so far, we have not been able to infuse our history and culture into the tourism industry properly. This idea is inspired by President Solih's speech at the function to mark the 100th anniversary of Muleeaage, the official presidential residence. He very boldly said that culture has now become an important part of our economy as more and more travelers, especially millennials travel to explore and experience different cultures, heritages and to learn about their ways of living.

We at MITDC believed we must start work immediately to make this vision a success. We were in the midst of brainstorming when public offices closed due to the pandemic, forcing all of us to work remotely from home. Our small team took this as an advantage and collectively started researching. We all agreed that most of the heritage and historical locations are in inhabited islands, and these islands are widely inaccessible to tourists due to transportation reasons. Therefore, we incorporated sailing, or what we call "nautical tourism". I mean, why not? Maldives is 99% sea, and we were famous seafarers. We have a long history of seafaring, and our ancestors were extremely skilled and clever at sailing these shallow waters and the great outer ocean without any maps.

On the other hand, we have our national heroes. Savaadheetha Dhathuru is a tribute to one of our greatest monarchs, As-Sultan al-Ghaazee Muhammad Thakurufaanu al-Auzam, commonly known as Bodu Thakurufaanu. His regnal name was Sri Savaadheetha Mahaaradhun, and it indicated his benignity and greatness Savaadheetha Dhathuru will retrace the maritime journey of Sultan Mohamed Thakurufaanu when he set off from his home island to defeat the colonial Portuguese and secure the freedom of Maldives.

This yacht rally is scheduled to begin its on February 2022 starting from the northernmost atoll of the country, Haa Alif Atoll and will be taking a course of 3 weeks to reach Baa Atoll. The expedition is arranged with stops at 10 inhabited islands, giving guests the chance to see local heritage sites and experience the island life. There will be six designated anchor points where yachtsmen can anchor their boats. Sea transfer will be arranged by the organizer to the remaining islands.

The aim of the organizers is to promote Maldivian culture & heritage, its rich history as well as nautical tourism and to exploit the benefits of strengthening these areas within the tourism industry of the country.

***Speaking of Heritage Tourism, in 2019, the Maldives government asked World Monuments Fund (WMF) to assist in preparing a nomination file for submission to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre for listing of the coral stone mosques of Maldives as a World Heritage site. What is your take on the constant efforts from Maldives to enter the permanent list of UNESCO's World Heritage?***

This is a very important effort. It is very important that our rich heritage is recognized by UNESCO as World Heritage sites. It was said by some historians that coral stone mosques, especially the ones that can be dismantled and assembled are only seen in the Maldives.

Likewise, there is the UNESCO-recognized biosphere reserve in Baa atoll in Maldives. Just look at its unique geographical location! It is effortlessly positioned above an open channel on the edge of the deep ocean, and is a marine wonderland; home to no less than 250 species of vibrant coral and over 1,200 fish species. Promoting our tourist sites will help encourage a culture of preservation, raise awareness of the tourist attraction and encourage locals and visitors to be mindful about their impact on the natural and built environment. Cultural and heritage tourism is so vital to the visitor economy, and our country should seek to maximize the opportunities it brings.

***Tell us about the ongoing investment projects/ infrastructure developments that will be crucial in boosting tourism and providing employment opportunities to the youth?***

The ongoing infrastructure development of Velana International Airport and development of new regional airports will enable easy access for tourists, to even the most remote islands of Maldives.

The registered number of tourism beds will explode these two years with the introduction of homestay tourism in Maldives, and this will create demand for more air and sea transport modes to the islands. These developments will create direct and indirect employment for youth across the sectors. Also, I believe the recent introduction of minimum wage will create more demand, and hopefully more opportunities for tourism jobs as well.

***In May 2020, during an international webinar organized by Island Innovation USA, you emphasized the need in developing decent accommodation facilities for resort employees in nearby islands where they could reside with their families, instead of having to live in crowded staff quarters within the resort island. Do you see resorts taking adequate measures in ensuring their employees achieve a work-life balance?***

During the pandemic we witnessed the struggles of resort workers who were stuck in their small resort accommodations and unable to go back to their families for months, due to travel restrictions. Even though workers are provided in-house accommodations of good condition at the resorts, it can be much healthier for the workers to live with their immediate families and kids. It is the government's top priority to integrate tourism workers and their families, and enable a healthy work-life balance.

***Over the years working in the betterment of the tourism industry, what would you consider as your most impressive achievement?***

I am fairly new to the tourism industry, and it has

been a learning experience so far. In this short span of time, I have met and discussed tourism with a lot of local and international stakeholders. We are witnessing exciting times, and this year we are marking the industry's golden jubilee. On the other hand, we are also witnessing the most challenging times in the history of modern tourism and hospitality, due to competition, and in also the coronavirus pandemic.

***The Maldivian authorities through an amendment to the Airport Taxes and Fees Act, have begun implementing a new Departure Tax effective 1st January 2022. Do you believe the revenue generated via the newly introduced 'Departure tax' will be adequate to repay the loans borrowed to develop Velana International Airport (VIA)?***

Maldives Airports Company Limited, operator of Velana International Airport is a revenue generating company itself. Bringing the new runway into operation this year will increase the airport's air traffic, and this will bring in additional revenue to MACL. The new international terminal remains a crucial element in completing the airport and readying it to handle the increasing demand. Some decisions of the previous administration had contributed to some difficulties we are facing today in repaying debt, and obviously, the newly introduced departure tax will help in these avenues.

***Tourism industry is mainly concerned with giving services to people who are going away from home, either on a business or leisure trip. According to your experience in this field, how can Maldives improve or expand our tourism product and operations to meet future market demands, and what is your message to talented locals working in this industry?***

Getting to Maldives is a total getaway from the hectic city life. It is about immersing to a totally relaxed environment, in a very private destination, where there are no disturbances from paparazzi, or interruption from salesmen selling items while you are relaxing at the beach or your private villa. Maldives can expand on medical tourism, MICE tourism, sea sports tourism such as Yacht racing, and many other aspects too. My advice to youth is to enhance their skills, talent and artists and align their talents towards the tourism industry as there is more than enough opportunities on this side.

***If there is one thing that you would like to accomplish during your tenure. Your lasting legacy, what would that be?***

I would like to assist and help formulate integrated tourism projects in these remote islands where there are very few economic opportunities, and eliminate the need to migrate to Malé or resorts for employment. The current reality is that they have to leave their home islands and live in small rented flats in the capital city, where they have to spend most of their income for rent.

The current government has plans to develop several locations as hotspots for community-based tourism. These projects will be designed with an emphasis on achieving sustainability for the growing industry. This is the vision of President Solih and his Jazeera Raajje manifesto. If I can be part of that long-lasting legacy, then it will be a great honor and satisfaction for myself.

## EVENTS &amp; AWARDS

## South Asian Travel Awards Opens Nominations for 2022



South Asia's most anticipated tourism and hospitality recognition award has opened nomination for the year 2022. The award which was launched in 2016 recognizes the best of South Asia's hospitality and travel industry. The prestigious annual event honours stellar organizations and individuals in a wide array of categories.

SATA opened the nominations with over 52 categories for properties and brands to compete, in addition to Visitors Choice Awards and Special Recognition Awards.

The SATA event planned for 2021 was cancelled and nominees had been carried forward to 2022 due to the

global pandemic and travel restrictions. SATA team hopes 2022 to be more favourable to the Hospitality Industry and the wishes the travel industry to boom this year.

SATA has been endorsed by over 15 International and government agencies for its work to elevate tourism and hospitality in the region.

- 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)
- Bangladesh International Hotel Association (BIHA)
- The Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO)

This year SATA celebrates its 6th year in recognizing the regions Travel, Tourism and Hospitality Industry. Despite all the challenges, SATA 2020 was held virtually.

The previous editions being held at Amari Galle, Sri Lanka (2019), Taj Mahal Palace, India (2018), Equator Village, Maldives (2017) and Mount Lavinia Hotel, Sri Lanka (2016).

The SATA Team believes that a nation must go on. The travel industry, especially, must prevail by working together during one of the most difficult times the world is facing. The market would be tough, however, lifting ourselves up and standing strong will only speed up recover. The impact is global and how we act locally would benefit the tourism industry of South Asia and around the globe.

*Properties can now nominate online via [www.southasiantravelawards.com](http://www.southasiantravelawards.com) until April 10, 2022.*

## Reethi Faru Resort Chosen as the Winner of 2021 World Travel Awards and the 2022 Condé Nast Johansens Award for Excellence

Reethi Faru Resort has been declared the Indian Ocean Continental Winner in the 'Leading Green Resort' category of the 2021 World Travel Awards.

World Travel Awards TM is globally recognized as the most esteemed and comprehensive program from the UK. It was established in 1993 to acknowledge, reward and celebrate excellence across all key sectors of the travel, tourism, and hospitality industries.

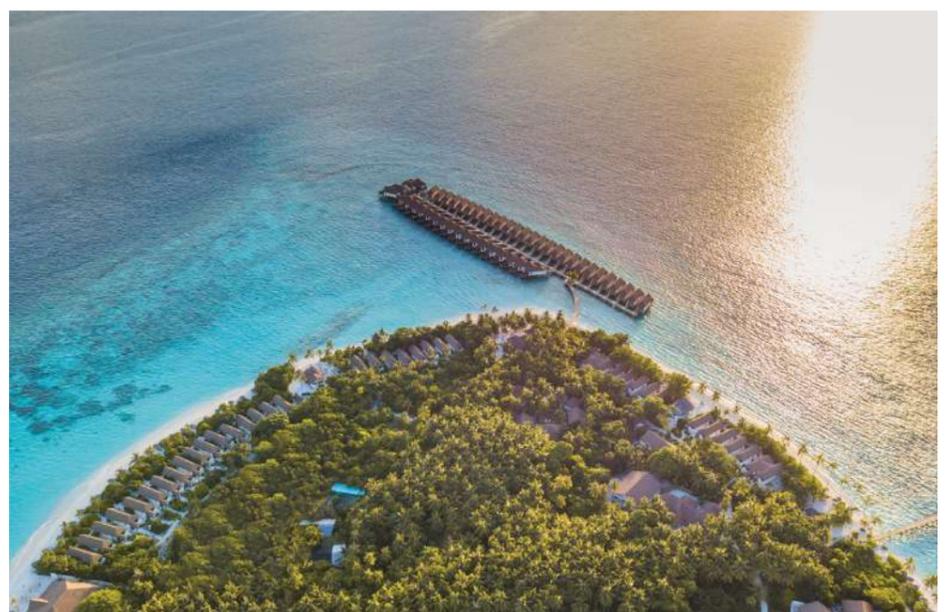
2021 is the third consecutive year that Reethi Faru Resort has won this prestigious award from the World Travel Hotel Awards.

Reethi Faru Resort is also the first-time winner of the Best Hotel Spa Award in 2022 Condé Nast Johansens Award for Excellence.

Condé Nast Johansens Award for Excellence is a trustworthy organization with a global collection of independent luxury hotels, spas and venues approved annually by Local Experts. The best properties from around the globe are selected for inclusion in their collection.

The resort has been in the collection since 2018. Reethi Faru Resort celebrates their first win on Condé Nast Johansens Award for Excellence.

Cast adrift in Raa Atoll, Reethi Faru is a wonderfully secluded bio-luxury island retreat where it's all about letting the natural beauty do the talking. A stunning lagoon catches the sun like a glittering topaz, rays, reef sharks and sea turtles glide through the vibrant house reef.



With a focus on sustainable luxury, the resort invites you to co-share its vision of being the guardian of the island. Reethi Faru is a private boutique resort with an enviable pedigree for

conserving the islands' natural beauty and sustaining the ecosystems upon which the fragile coral reef relies.



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## EVENTS &amp; AWARDS

# MUI at Six Senses Laamu Rewarded Global Award for Conservation and the Designation of Marine Protected Areas in Laamu Atoll



The Maldives Underwater Initiative (MUI) was recently recognized as a global leader in marine conservation during the 20th Skål International Sustainable Tourism Awards. Shortly after, Maldivian President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih and his administration designated six naturally unique and eco-rich areas in Laamu Atoll as Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). This announcement comes just two months after the atoll was declared as a Hope Spot by Mission Blue.

## Recognition for Conservation Progress

MUI, the marine biology team at Six Senses Laamu, consisting of hosts from the resort and its three partner NGOs: The Manta Trust, Blue Marine Foundation and The Olive Ridley Project, has been named Marine and Coastal category winner at the 2021 Skål International Sustainable Tourism Awards. This is the second Skål trophy on display at Six Senses Laamu after the resort was crowned winners of the same category in 2018. Three independent sustainability experts judged 50 entrees from 26 countries, placing MUI top in its category ahead of five other projects.

“To receive this award twice is an incredible achievement,” explains Marteyne van Well, Six Senses Laamu General Manager, “and it is testament to the progress MUI has made in the realms of marine conservation since we won our first Skål Award three years ago.”

This award celebrates the team’s dedication to marine conservation through their research, education and community outreach work. Their research has been presented at both science

symposiums and governmental meetings to drive policy change. They have provided 199 children in Laamu with marine conservation and environmental education and brought 566 students from local schools on snorkeling excursions. Since 2019, they have had 26,000 moments of education with guests and certified 165 children through their Junior Marine Biology Program.

## Six Designated Marine Protected Areas

Just one day after the award was announced, MUI’s celebrations continued when the President of the Maldives, Mr. Ibrahim Mohamed Solih, announced six MPAs were coming to Laamu. The team has been working towards this milestone for many years.

“Since MUI was formed, our ultimate goal has been to protect Laamu’s marine habitats and keystone megafauna species through legislation,” says Philippa Roe, MUI’s Head Marine Biologist. “For years, the partners within MUI – Six Senses Laamu, the Manta Trust, Blue Marine Foundation, and the Olive Ridley Project – have been gathering research on Laamu’s marine ecosystems and species, much of which was used as evidence to support marine protection.”

The areas which have been designated for marine protection include the turtle nesting beach, mangrove and seagrass area of L. Gaadhoo (a neighboring uninhabited island of Six Senses Laamu), the channel between Six Senses Laamu and L. Gaadhoo, the mangrove of L. Hithadhoo (an inhabited island on the other side of Six Senses Laamu), as well as two channels, a mangrove, a wetland and an island in other areas of the atoll.

“The new MPAs, consisting of interconnected coral reefs, mangroves, and seagrass meadows, will support Laamu’s community by safeguarding fish populations and livelihoods while maintaining climate-resilient reefs,” explains Shaha Hashim, the Maldives Project Manager for Blue Marine Foundation and a driving force behind the designation of the MPAs.

## Home to Regenerative Travel Activism

The Skål award was not the only award received in Laamu last month. On December 15, 2021, the winners of the Regenerative Travel 2021 Impact Awards were announced, and Shaha was recognized as the Regenerative Activist of the Year. The award recognizes her dedication to these MPA designations by describing her as, “a voice for many who do not have the capacity or platform to speak, working towards fair and well-managed resources based upon scientific evidence.”

Now that these MPAs have been designated, the Environment Ministry will work with stakeholders, including Atoll and Island Councils, to develop management plans for each area. MUI and Blue Marine Foundation will continue to engage with local community members and leaders in the atoll, providing advice and assistance wherever needed.

## Mission Blue Hope Spot

This welcome news comes just two months after the Laamu Atoll was declared as a Hope Spot by the international marine conservation non-profit Mission Blue. The Hope Spot announcement highlighted the importance of marine ecosystems in the atoll and the need for further protection.

NEW OPENINGS

# Island Luxury by Secret Paradise Opens First Local Island Boutique Hotel



Taking local island tourism to a new level, Island Luxury by Secret Paradise has opened their first local island property on Baa Fulhadhoo, with the aim of offering authentic local island experiences and to set an industry example of community-inclusiveness at its fullest meaning.

Island Luxury Fulhadhoo Boutique Hotel offers 4 spacious pool view rooms with open air bathrooms on the upper floor, 2 garden rooms with 2 standard rooms located on the ground floor. Positioned within a coconut palm grove and a few steps from the ocean, Island Luxury provides an idyllic island getaway.

Island Luxury believes it is people who transform a holiday into an unforgettable experience and this is

why the local community of Fulhadhoo is at the heart of their business. From the skilled local carpenters who have hand crafted the Boutique Hotel, to the nimble fingered seamstresses who have designed and made uniforms and pieces of soft furnishings. From the Maldivian chef, gardeners and cleaners to the captain and crew on the private sailing yacht SY Island Luxury. From their trained team of private Thakuru/Kamana - Island Luxury signature butlers, who will make every dream a possibility to their team of local hosts who will share the secrets of their island home.

The island's Women's Development Committee provide local ladies employment opportunities to support in-house laundry services, bake cakes, pastries and hedhikaa and organize a weekly food festival; a venue where guests and local families can interact and engage over tastes of the Maldives.

Providing 5\* services including a personal butler for each room, a breath-taking infinity pool and privately organised tailor made activities. Guests can choose between a Full Board Plus or All-Inclusive Package including an ever changing ala carte menu. All dishes are prepared in house and combine Maldives traditional cuisine and flavours with a western twist.

Island Luxury Fulhadhoo has been built and developed by Ziyad Mohamed, Co-Founder of Secret Paradise Maldives. Secret Paradise Maldives is an award winning sustainable and educational guided tour company based in Hulhumale. Their values of bringing tourists and local communities together as well as promoting sustainable travel and education is the inspiration behind the development of Island Luxury Fulhadhoo. Ziyad proudly states that 95% of the team are youth from the island of Fulhadhoo who completed an in house hospitality program during 2021 and that all but 2 members of the 25 strong team are all Maldivian.

At Secret Paradise Maldives, they believe that a great local guide makes the difference between a good holiday and a memorable one. Since 2012, they have specialized in providing Maldives sustainable experiences and tours that leave lasting memories.

Their professional Maldivian team has years of local knowledge and expertise to share. They are passionate about sharing their country's culture, history, and tradition, as well as their own personal experiences. Their guides are certified First Aiders and Lifeguards ensuring you a safe and fun experience!

# Waldorf Astoria Maldives to Introduce Contemporary Japanese Cuisine Concept, Zuma

Waldorf Astoria Maldives Ithaafushi reveals its newest addition to the array of gastronomic experiences offered at the island paradise, announcing the opening of internationally-renowned Japanese cuisine-inspired, Zuma in the Indian Ocean for the first time.

Following the traditional Japanese izakaya style, Zuma was founded in London in 2002 by co-founders Rainer Becker and Arjun Waney. The concept has been introduced in 17 locations across the globe so far.

Zuma will be showcased in the Maldives combining the breath-taking views of the crystal-clear Indian Ocean and Zuma's unique style and elegance; a dramatic entrance combining elements of timber, light and granite creating an immersive optical illusion leading guests into the vibrant restaurant space. The majestic island bar, robata and sushi counter take center stage in the

middle of the venue and forms the focal point for diners.

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

"With its legacy of global culinary excellence, Zuma is the perfect addition to Waldorf Astoria Maldives's fine selection of specialty dining venues. This pristine setting surrounded by crystal blue waters combined with Zuma's legendary elevated izakaya concept, will provide a dream to the senses for luxury leisure seekers around the world," said Etienne Dalancon, General Manager, Waldorf Astoria Maldives Ithaafushi.



## IN THE NEWS

## Newly Developed Madivaru Airport to be Managed and Operated by Island Aviation Services



Island Aviation Services Limited (IASL) has announced that it has undertaken all operations and management of the newly developed Madivaru regional airport located in Lh Atoll.

IASL signed an agreement with the developer of the airport, Kuredu Holdings Pvt Ltd to officially handover the operations during a small ceremony held January 17, 2022.

Kuredu Holdings together with IASL are currently working to complete the final

tasks required for the opening of the airport. Maldivian is expected to operate scheduled flights to Madivaru Airport in the coming month of February 2022.

Madivaru Airport features a 1,200-metre runway, aircraft parking area, terminal and a fire building. Island Aviation operates the domestic airports; B. Dharavandhoo Airport, Th. Thimarafushi Airport, and R. Ifuru Airport in addition to Maafaru International Airport.

## The Vice President Inaugurates Satellite Education in the Maldives



Vice President Faisal Naseem has officially inaugurated satellite education in the Maldives, launching the Satellite Hub Centre in Huravee School in Malé City, connecting satellite schools in three islands; Fehendhoo Island in Baa Atoll, and Thinadhoo Island and Rakeedhoo Island in Vaavu Atoll.

Speaking at the function held at Huravee School, Vice President Faisal said that the inauguration of satellite education is part of the administration's broader vision of decentralized development. Students from the three islands, he said, have longed for the opportunity to continue their education

in their respective islands. He then noted that the new opportunity would bring ease to the students and their families.

Furthermore, the Vice President spoke about the administration's efforts in improving the education sector and decentralised development. The satellite schooling concept was adopted in remote islands that lack public schools, with each satellite school staffed by two on-site facilitator teachers, an administrative officer, and a school helper. They are connected to the Satellite Hub Centre via high-speed internet.

## Hassan Marine Opens New Showroom

The exclusive distributor of Mercury outboard motors in the Maldives, Hassan Marine Engineering Solutions has opened a new showroom this January. The showroom is located at the Raiveribey Park (STO Food Court).

Commencing business in 1999, Hassan Marine Engineering Solutions started off operations as a service center carrying out repair and maintenance for outboard engines. Maldives boats continues to heavily rely on this propulsion system; outboard motors, for high-speed transportation across the islands.

Over the years, Hassan Marine has established its place as the leading marine equipment distributor in the Maldives. Managing Director of the company, Mr. Hassan Haleem secured Mercury dealership, introducing its renowned and outstanding products in the Maldives during a time where Yamaha dominated the market along with some other brands.



Hassan Marine, with assistance from Mercury Marine has carefully chosen models best suited for the Maldives. These include the world renowned Verado Series ideally suited for Resorts, the commercially durable bigfoot range and Mercury's famous small hp portable

range. Hassan Marine further provides unparalleled after sales and warranty service backed by Mercury.

With over twenty years of work experience in marine mechanical engineering and island resort

construction projects, Mr. Hassan worked in the expansion of the company's portfolio, introducing Quicksilver Parts & Accessories, Attwood Marine Products, NGK Spark Plugs, Multiflex Steering Systems.

The company's participation in the Maldives Marine Expo 2021 is one of its highlights from last year, where they showcased its growing line of products and services. During the event where, President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih visited, Mr. Hassan thanked the president for government's decision to implement 0% duty on Marine Engines and spares which had helped sustain the business in the aftermath of COVID-19 pandemic.

Hassan Marine together with industry partners including various resorts look forward to upholding relationships and working together to grow business for the mutual benefit of all involved and to develop the marine sector, meeting the requirements of all its customers.

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Authority



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Coast Guard



Marine Police  
Maldives Police  
Service



MNU, Centre for  
Maritime Studies



Maldives Marketing &  
PR Corporation



Maldives Association  
of Tourism Industry



Maldives Association  
of Travel Agents  
& Tour Operators



Raajje TV

## IN THE NEWS

## Maldives Implements New Departure Tax



From January 1, 2022, Maldives has implemented new Departure Tax replacing the Airport Service Charge (ASC) previously applied for locals and foreigners. The new departure tax implemented by Maldives Inland Revenue Authority (MIRA) will be valid for travelers departing from all the currently operating airports of the Maldives.

Similar to the ASC, those with diplomatic immunity, transit passengers and children below the age of 2 years are exempt from departure tax.

Locals are required to pay USD12 and foreigners USD30 tax on economy class. All travelers, despite citizenship, are required to pay:

- USD60 on business class
- USD90 on first class
- USD120 on non-scheduled/chartered flights and private jets

For scheduled flights, the airlines are responsible for collecting Departure Tax from their passengers. While for chartered flights and private jets, it is the responsibility of the airport operator to collect these taxes.

## MTCC Signs to Commence Mathi Komandoo Connectivity Project



Maldives Transport and Contracting Company Plc (MTCC) has signed with Ministry of National Planning, Housing and Infrastructure to commence Sh. Komandoo Shore Protection Rectification Works and Mathi Komandoo Connectivity Project.

During a special ceremony held at the Ministry, Mr. Adam Azim, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) signed the deal on behalf of MTCC while Mr. Anwar Ali, Deputy Director General signed on behalf of the Ministry.

MTCC revealed the scope of works will include reclamation operations of 16.7 hectares, construction of a 1520m revetment, a 353m groynes, a 112m geo-bag revetment and a 200m bridge.

With the deadline set to complete the

project within two years (730 days), the project is valued at MVR 240.90 million.

Over the past three years, MTCC has undertaken and completed 42 projects of harbor construction, reclamation and shore protection.

Incorporated in 1980, MTCC offers a diverse range of services such as construction and project management services, logistical operations, modern transport services, engineering and docking service in addition to a plethora of reputed products of well-known brands.

Since its establishment, MTCC has positioned itself as a leading marine and land transport provider and civil and marine constructor of the Maldives.

## Gulf Craft Marks 20 Years of Manufacturing in the Maldives



One of the world's premier boat and yacht manufacturers, Gulf Craft, is marking 20 years of its operation in the Maldives which has played a pivotal role in developing the marine transportation network of the island nation.

Gulf Craft provides almost 80% of the Maldives's water transportation services which includes public transport, coast guard, emergency & ambulance services, resorts, and leisure boats. With a strong and established presence in the country, Gulf Craft is now developing a new production facility dedicated to the manufacturing of vessels for use in the Indian Ocean which will see its operations and production capacity double within 16 months.

In early 2021 the shipyard was awarded a government contract, thru MTCC, to manufacture a fleet of specially designed high-quality speed boats for use across the Integrated National Public Ferry Network. The new speed boats will offer a convenient and efficient transportation system to all administrative islands of the Maldives, with capabilities to transport up to 53 passengers at a time and will connect the capital city to nearby islands. The vessels will be equipped with special packages for passengers travelling in emergency situations and will include access for stretchers and people with disabilities. The public transportation project is one of the largest government initiatives and will contribute to connecting the various islands of the Maldives upon completion.

Gulf Craft's Chairman, Mohammed Hussein Alshaali, said: "The Government of the Maldives and its people have constantly been a beacon of support since the establishment of our operations without whom this remarkable feat would not be possible. We are grateful to the Maldives for entrusting Gulf Craft with projects that have played a part in the growth of the nation over these twenty years. The Maldives is our first international destination, where we have built in-country competencies by leveraging the opportunities that the country provides for the marine and tourism sector. With the doubling of our production capacity and the new training facility we hope to serve the local community even better through the creation of new job opportunities and in further boosting tourism."

Gulf Craft established its operations in the Maldives with a 100,000 square foot manufacturing facility that has produced top-quality pleasure boats and rapid transport vessels. Gulf Craft is now focusing on further expansion of its operations in the Maldives to support the government's strategy to strengthen the tourism sector. This will be driven by doubling its production capacity in the country and by giving back to the community through the new training facility for captains and crew.

Last year Gulf Craft announced that it will invest in a strategic development in the Maldives named 'Gulf Lagoon'. The project will feature a state-of-the-art manufacturing facility, a marina for seafarers and live-aboards, a maritime school offering captain/crew training for young Maldivians, and a resort, among others.

IN THE NEWS

# President Reveals Expansion Plan of Maafaru International Airport



President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih has revealed that Noonu Atoll Maafaru Airport is set to undergo expansion works this year.

Addressing the people of Maafaru island, President Solih said that Maafaru International Airport expansion project has been planned to commence this year following the needs and concerns of the island community.

The airport will include an extended runway, a newly developed airport hotel and improved refueling services in addition to other essential services by the end of the development project.

During President Solih's visit to Maafaru Island as part of his two-day tour of South Miladhunmadulu Atoll, he assured that the administration stands committed to delivering its pledges.

# Share Your Most Adventurous Moment in the Maldives and Stand the Chance to Win a 2 Night Stay at Thundi Village



hashtag, '#visitmaldivesnow' and tag @visitmaldives and @ooredoomaldives. Photos of activities such as snorkeling, surfing, fishing, scuba diving and more can be shared to win the grand offer as per the month's theme, 'Adventure in the Maldives'.

With deadline set for February 14, 2022, the winning contestant will be announced mid-February.

Ooredoo Maldives with Orca media group is offering an exciting chance to win a 2-night stay for 2 at Thundi Village Maldives, as part of the 'Visit Maldives Now' photography marketing campaign launched in August 2021.

All you have to do is share captures of your most adventurous moments in the Maldives on Instagram with the

The modern boutique beach front hotel, Thundi Village Maldives features 18 spacious rooms, a private beach area, Spa and a restaurant in addition to scuba dive school. All guest rooms are equipped with all necessary amenities including a flat-screen TV with satellite channels, air conditioning, a bath, and free toiletries.



# 40/60

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# SEAPRO

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## BON APPÉTIT

# Tuna Tiradito



Chef Diego was born in Monterrey, Mexico, a city well known for its industrial and business atmosphere, where the high-end cuisine has a strong presence. He started working in banquet halls, luxury restaurants in Playa del Carmen and New York. A couple of adventurous seasons working in a luxury cruise line gave Diego the desire to travel the world and share his culture through his food. This brought him to the Maldives to join an expert team in Hard Rock Hotel Maldives where he is currently running the kitchen of their Mexican-Latin specialty restaurant.

*"The inspiration behind this dish is a trip I made to Peru in the Summer of 2017, where I experienced the fusion cuisine that exists in that country from old immigrants from Japan, and got thrilled by the way an ancient technique can be twist into creating something beautiful with Latin ingredients."*

## Ingredients:

- Tuna Steak, aprox. 14 slices - 75 gr
- Serrano Chili - 2 gr
- Fried Scallions (White) - 5 gr
- Chives, sliced - 1 gr
- Toasted White Sesame - 2 gr
- Soy Tamarind - 10 gr
- Lime Juice - 3 gr
- Red Onion - 7 gr
- Cucumber - 12 gr
- Sesame oil - 2 gr
- Tonka Beans - 0.5 gr
- Tortilla Chips Previously Fried - 45 gr
- Yield: 1 portion

## Preparation:

- Slice the tuna steak in nice rectangles sashimi style. Reserve.
- Slice the serrano chili in fine rounds. Reserve
- Toast white sesame on the salamander. Reserve
- Squeeze lime juice in a squeeze bottle, add a little bit of sesame oil and reserve.
- Slice red onion in fine julienne and reserve.
- Cut the cucumber in half moon shape without seeds.
- Place randomly on the plate some sliced cucumber and red onion.
- Place the tuna sashimi on the plate topping the vegetables previously display and splash with a drizzle of the lime and sesame oil mixture.
- Add the soy tamarind to make a pool on the plate and cover the tuna partially.
- Place a sliced chili on top of every piece of tuna.
- Decorate the dish with fried scallion, green sliced scallion, toasted sesame seeds and some more red onion.
- Dish is ready for service to take to the customers. Serve with tortilla chips on the side.

## Soy Tamarind Ingredients:

- Soy Sauce - 180 gr
- Tamarind Pulp - 72 gr
- Brown Sugar - 30 gr
- Red Onion - 30 gr
- Yield: 300 gr / 30 portions

## Preparation:

- Mix the brown sugar, red onion, soy sauce and tamarind pulp in a blender and mix altogether. Make sure the sauce is balanced between sweetness, saltiness and sourness. Adjust if needed. Reserve

## Tamarind pulp ingredients:

- Tamarind paste - 400 gr
- Water - 500 gr
- Yields: 650 gr. / 9 portions

## Preparation:

- Mix both ingredients in a small sauce pot, bring to a simmer. Break apart the tamarind pulp.
- Strain and discard the tamarind seeds and steams.

## Fried Scallions Ingredients:

- White Scallions - 50 gr
- Corn Starch - 35 gr
- Salt - 4 gr
- Frying Oil - 250 gr
- Yield: 45 gr / 9 portions

## Preparation:

- Slice the white scallions thinly and mix them with salt. Reserve.
- After 5 minutes mix the scallions with corn starch and fry in hot oil until crispy and golden brown.



Courtesy of  
Junior Sous Chef, Diego Duncan Gómez  
The Elephant & The Butterfly  
Hard Rock Hotel Maldives



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While celebrating over 20 years in the business we provide full color printing services onto any type of flat surface, including wood, plastic and metal.

# Frankly Speaking

**Will Homestay be an advantage to Maldivian tourism? Or will it bring revenue and change positioning from a unique destination to an all-inclusive average one.**



**Ibrahim Nizam**  
Managing Director  
The Grand Associates

Today, The Maldives is universally known and reputed luxury holiday destination. It is a brand that stays in the hearts and minds of everyone who is anyone planning a holiday or a trip abroad.

What we have gained over the years is the result of proper planning and maintaining a sustainable tourism product.

This year we are celebrating the golden jubilee of our tourism industry. Years ago, we started our journey as an infant trying to learn to walk a long road. And this journey began from home-stay that was not so organized, but with that genuine and typical Maldivian hospitality and smile. A smile that never fades away from the memories of those guests who enjoyed our local home-stays.

And years passed by, the demands grew and the influx of travelers also increased. Ultimately the industry needed to find ways to cater the demands of growing numbers and thus beds increased, different categories of resorts, hotels, city hotels, island hotels(guest-houses)came into operation.

Now the question remains, are we doing our best to maintain all our tourism products in a co-existence environment and keep our focus on the brand Maldives?

If so, how do we define luxury? Can we redefine our product and extend our guests that affordable luxury of the local islands through, scarcity, rarity, privacy and safety?



**Dr. Mariyam Zulfa**  
Former Tourism Minister of  
Maldives 2008 - 2012

I don't think the destination image of the Maldives tourism product will be affected by the introduction of homestay or guest house tourism. Maldives image as a luxury tourism destination is now mature enough to allow the introduction of midrange beds.



**Rejeev Kohli**  
Joint Managing Director  
Creative Travel

There are different markets and different budget levels. I think well controlled, it will be an advantage of capture a market that wants to come but cannot afford it



**Mohamed Firaq**  
Managing Director  
Inner Maldives Holidays

In a nutshell, we are focusing our marketing efforts in diversifying our portfolio taking into consideration key sources of customer segments but also diversifying our other markets without neglecting our investment in our traditional markets. We believe that Maldives has a beautiful story to tell and for that we would need to deliver better, to personalize our marketing to ensure we reach our audiences with the right information and at the right time.



**Aditya Raj Singh**  
Head of Sales  
Amaya Kuda Rah, Maldives

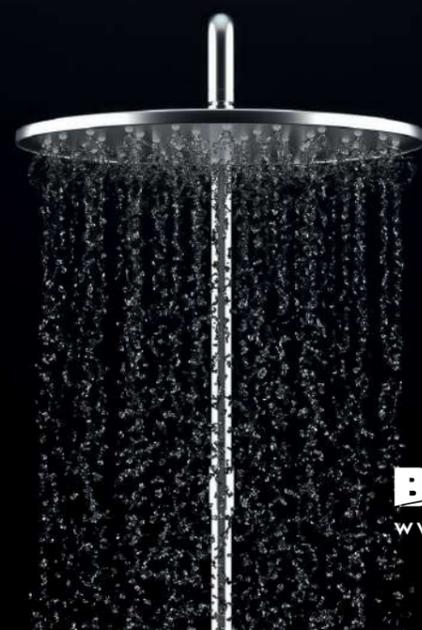
I do not feel that Maldives as a destination will change its charisma and will ever go down from the bucket list of the lovely guest who aspire to be here. For me since we have entered the digital era the more guests will visit more digitally strong we as a destination will become. This is a Paradise and everyone in the world and should be able to visit the Paradise once.



**Nina Nizar**  
Director of Sales & Marketing  
Sun Siyam Travels

It will not be a huge advantage for Maldivian tourism per se in terms of revenue. But it will bring in some revenue. The great thing is this earning will go to the common people. I don't think it will have a huge impact on how Maldives is perceived as a destination. It will still retain its exclusive status. But this will create a new niche, a different and more authentic experience. as long as it's regulated properly.

**Innovation that combines sensational design with sustainability.**





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