

The islandchief

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NESCAFÉ

TASTE OF ADVENTURE

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Hospitality Through a Maldivian Lens

with

Ahmed Zahir

**General Manager
Angsana Velavaru**



Air Arabia Becomes First International
Airline to Operate from Velana
International Airport's New Terminal

Pg: 03

SATA 2025 Unveils Esteemed Partners
and Sets Stage for 9th Edition in
Colombo, Sri Lanka

Pg: 14

VCL Group Leads the Way in
Excellence with Landmark Housing
Project in Maldives

Pg: 20

PAGE: 12

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Dear Readers,

South Asian tourism is entering a vibrant and transformative era. The 9th South Asian Travel Awards (SATA), set to take place on 19–20 September 2025 at the iconic Cinnamon Grand Colombo, Sri Lanka, will convene the region's foremost leaders in travel and hospitality. With Sri Lanka Tourism as the Destination Partner and a distinguished roster of Maldivian and regional collaborators, SATA 2025 promises not only to celebrate excellence but also to foster cross-border innovation, collaboration, and strategic vision.

Meanwhile, the Maldives continues to elevate its aviation capabilities. Ace Travels Maldives has been appointed as the official General Sales Agent for Qatar Airways, managing ticketing, reservations, and customer services, further cementing its role as a key aviation partner. Simultaneously, Hanimaadhoo International Airport nears completion, with 91% of construction finalized and operations expected to commence by November 2025. This USD 129.7 million development introduces modern facilities including the country's first aerobridge outside Malé—supporting both domestic and international flights, while boosting tourism, trade, and regional growth.

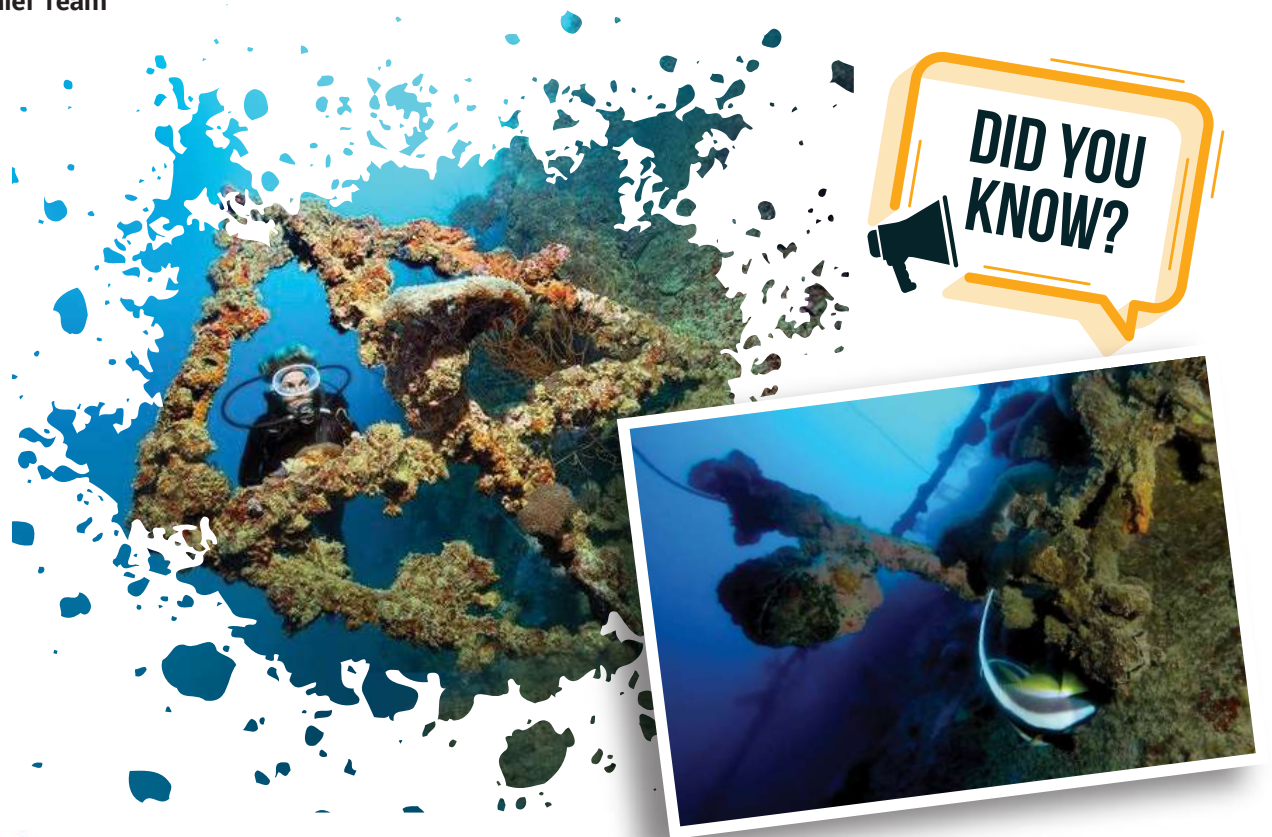
At the heart of Maldivian hospitality lies authenticity, immersing visitors in the islands' people, culture, and natural beauty. Mr. Ahmed Zahir, General Manager of Angsana Velavaru, exemplifies this spirit. From Banyan Tree Vabbinfaru to leading one of the Group's flagship resorts, his people-first leadership and dedication to excellence have set new benchmarks. Read his story for a masterclass in resilience, vision, and inspiration for the next generation of hospitality leaders.

In our Bon Appétit feature, Chef Chetan Singh, Chef De Tournant at The Westin Maldives Miriandhoo Resort, shares his indulgent Coconut Crème Brûlée—a silky, aromatic dessert that perfectly balances tropical coconut sweetness with a delicate caramelized crust. With nearly two decades of culinary mastery across India, Jordan, and the Maldives, Chef Singh continues precision, flair, and passion to each and every creation of his.

Finally, in Frankly Speaking, our industry stakeholders explore the Maldives' aspirations to attract long-haul travelers despite limited direct connections beyond the Middle East and Asia Pacific—a critical discussion on the country's evolving global connectivity and strategic positioning.

These stories underscore a timeless truth: the Maldives' enduring strength lies not only in its breathtaking landscapes but in its spirit of innovation, compassion, and visionary leadership—qualities that continue to define its position on the world tourism stage.

Until next time,
The Islandchief Team



BRITISH LOYALTY WRECK

The British Loyalty is one of the most famous wrecks in the Maldives, located at a depth of 33 meters in Addu Atoll between Maradhoo and Hithadhoo. Originally a 140-meter oil tanker built in Newcastle in 1928, it was damaged by Japanese and German attacks during WWII while serving as a fuel supply vessel for the British Royal Air Force base in Gan. Scuttled in 1946 during the British withdrawal, the wreck is now a vibrant dive site covered in corals and home to schools of fish, turtles, and occasional manta rays and sharks. Easily accessible by speedboat, it is a favorite among technical divers and liveaboard trips.

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Air Arabia Becomes First International Airline to Operate from Velana International Airport's New Terminal



Air Arabia has made history as the first international airline to commence operations from the newly opened Terminal 1 at Velana International Airport (MLE). The airline's inaugural flight from the state-of-the-art facility took place on August 13, 2025, marking a major milestone in the phased transition of carriers to the new terminal.

To celebrate the occasion, a ceremonial ribbon-cutting event was held, attended by senior representatives from Maldives Airports Company Limited (MACL), Air Arabia Group, and other dignitaries. The event highlighted both Air Arabia's operational launch at Terminal 1 and the airport's ongoing transformation into a modern global gateway.

Terminal 1, inaugurated on July 26, 2025, during the Maldives' 60th Independence Day celebrations, initially served only the national carrier, Maldivian. Air Arabia's move marks the first foreign airline transition, paving the way for other international carriers to shift operations to the new terminal in the coming weeks.

The facility represents a major upgrade for Velana International Airport, with the capacity to accommodate up to 7.5 million passengers annually. It features six aerobridges, advanced automated baggage systems, and expanded immigration and check-in areas, designed to deliver a seamless and efficient travel experience.

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ACROSS THE SKIES

Hanimaadhoo International Airport Upgrade Nears Completion: Operations to Begin by November

Hanimaadhoo's transformation into a modern international airport is almost complete, with 91% of the work finished and operations expected to start by November, H.E. President Dr. Mohamed Muizzu announced during his visit to Haa Dhaalu Atoll. He stressed the project's strategic importance for the northern Maldives, noting its role in boosting connectivity and economic growth.

According to the Regional Airports Company Limited (RACL), major infrastructure components such as the runway, control tower, cargo terminal, hangar taxiway, and utility systems are 99% complete. Passenger and jetty terminals have reached 92% completion.

The new terminal, spanning 10,380 square meters, blends traditional Maldivian design with modern features, including the country's first aerobridge outside Malé. The upgraded airport will accommodate Airbus A320s, Boeing 737s, and ATR/Dash 8 aircraft, with apron space for nine planes—three jets and six turboprops. Annual passenger capacity is projected at 1.3 million,



with domestic services operating on the lower floor and international operations on the upper level.

Valued at USD 129.7 million, the project is expected to transform access to northern atolls, driving tourism, trade, and regional

development. H.E. President Dr. Mohamed Muizzu also revealed that passengers departing from Hanimaadhoo will be able to purchase US dollars at the official bank rate, with a dedicated dollar ATM to be installed outside the terminal.

In addition to the airport upgrade, the

President announced several initiatives for Hanimaadhoo, including local issuance of passports and national ID cards by the island council, and new housing, healthcare, and road development projects to support future growth.

Ace Travels Maldives Named Official GSA for Qatar Airways



Ace Travels Maldives has been appointed as the official General Sales Agent (GSA) for Qatar Airways in the Maldives, further strengthening its role in the country's aviation and travel

services sector.

Under this agreement, Ace Travels will handle passenger sales and support services for the airline, including

ticketing, reservations, and customer assistance. The appointment underscores the company's continued growth in aviation, where it already represents several international

carriers.

Qatar Airways currently operates regular flights to and from Velana International Airport, linking the Maldives to its extensive global network through Doha. With the new partnership, Ace Travels aims to enhance booking efficiency and improve customer engagement via its dedicated platforms and contact channels.

Established in 2002, Ace Travels Maldives has evolved into a leading travel and destination management company, offering services such as airline representation, outbound tourism, and corporate travel solutions. The company also operates FlyAceFly, a B2B booking portal designed to support sub-agents and corporate partners across the region.



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IN A NUTSHELL

Coco Bodu Hithi Elevates Island Experience with its Grand Premier Beach Villa with Pool

Amid the tranquil waters of North Malé Atoll, Coco Bodu Hithi unveils its newest retreat – the Grand Premier Beach Villa with Pool. Designed to embody the spirit of barefoot island living, this spacious hideaway pairs contemporary elegance with the natural rhythm of the Maldives, offering a haven of privacy, comfort, and calm for those seeking a deeper connection to the island.

Spanning an impressive 198 square metres, the villa is cocooned in lush greenery and framed by the crystal-clear waters of the Indian Ocean, offering an immersive tropical experience. Designed with intimacy and relaxation in mind, it caters effortlessly to couples celebrating romance, families seeking a quiet retreat, or guests seeking a pause from everyday life.

Every element of the Grand Premier Beach Villa with Pool is thoughtfully curated to complement its breathtaking surroundings. A cosy outdoor gazebo – complete with plush bean bags and a tranquil seating area – offers a serene spot for morning coffees, afternoon siestas, or quiet sunset reflections. At the far end of the villa, the private pool provides a refreshing retreat where guests can immerse themselves in soothing



waters within a peaceful setting.

The villa includes a garden courtyard with a daybed, perfect for reading or watching the night sky. A highlight is the open-air bathtub, set beneath palm trees to enjoy the warm breeze and quiet of the island.

Stepping inside the villa, guests are welcomed by a harmonious blend of comfort and style. A sunken living area flows effortlessly into a spacious dining zone, offering a beautiful space for shared moments or relaxed in-villa dining. At the centre of the villa, a king-sized bed with soft linens and

gentle tones offers a comfortable place to rest after a day in the sun or time spent on your private beachfront.

Amenities include indoor and outdoor showers, giving guests the option to bathe inside or under the open sky, a private sundeck with loungers overlooking the ocean, and a versatile table for working, writing, or dining. Guests can enjoy an in-villa Smart TV and complimentary Wi-Fi, along with a well-stocked mini bar, espresso machine, and other thoughtful details that bring an added sense of ease to the stay.

Step beyond your villa to your very own

stretch of private beach, where the soft white sands meet the warm waters of the lagoon. Whether wading into the sea, stretching into morning yoga on the deck, or enjoying a cocktail as the sun goes down, the villa keeps you close to the island's natural beauty.

The launch of the Grand Premier Beach Villa with Pool reflects Coco Bodu Hithi's focus on creating escapes that value privacy, authenticity, and a quiet sense of sophistication. More than just a place to stay, it's an invitation to slow down, connect more deeply, and experience the Maldives at its most relaxed and memorable.



Joy Island Maldives Unveils 'Joy Connect Hall' – The Ultimate Conference Venue in the Heart of Paradise



Joy Island Maldives announces the opening of Joy Connect Hall, a state-of-the-art conference venue designed to elevate business events and corporate gatherings with an atmosphere of elegance, comfort, and innovation.

Spanning 270 square meters, Joy Connect Hall offers an exquisite blend of functionality and sophistication, making it the perfect setting for a wide range of events, from corporate meetings to private seminars and creative workshops.

With the capacity to accommodate up to 120 guests, the hall is fully equipped with cutting-edge technology to ensure seamless and impactful presentations.

Unmatched Technology and Modern Facilities

Joy Connect Hall features a 12-foot diagonal Full HD projector, wireless microphones, and a six-speaker Bluetooth-enabled audio system, delivering high-quality sound and visuals for every presentation. Whether

hosting a product launch, a high-level seminar, or an intimate business discussion, the hall provides all the technical support required for a flawless event. It's more than just a conference space—it's a setting designed for collaboration, inspiration, and memorable experiences.

Gourmet Catering and Refreshments

To complement the exceptional setting, Joy Island offers a variety of gourmet food and beverage options. Whether you're looking for quick refreshments during coffee breaks, sophisticated bites for networking events, or full buffet spreads for larger gatherings, the culinary team at Joy Island provides a thoughtful selection to cater to every need. You can enjoy light snacks, delectable cocktails, nutritious business lunches, and non-alcoholic beverages—all designed to enhance the experience and keep your guests refreshed and engaged throughout the event.

Seamless Transfers and Access

Joy Connect Hall is located within the serene beauty of Joy Island, offering a tranquil backdrop that inspires creativity and focus. Accessing the venue is hassle-free, with speedboat transfers available for guests, ensuring smooth transportation between Velana International Airport and the island.

A Destination for Business Excellence

Whether you're organizing a high-profile business meeting, an inspiring workshop, or a private seminar, Joy Connect Hall at Joy Island Maldives is the ideal place to bring people together. The facility's refined atmosphere, cutting-edge amenities, and unparalleled service promise to make every event not just successful but extraordinary.

For more information on booking Joy Connect Hall or to plan your next corporate event at Joy Island Maldives, please contact event team at booking@joyisland.com.

IN A NUTSHELL

Huvafen Fushi Introduces the Soul Sanctuary, an Iconic Stay for Women in the Know



Huvafen Fushi introduces a soul-stirring escape for women who know the power of pause. Whether you're gathering your inner circle or gifting yourself the space you crave, this is a retreat designed to smooth the edges and stir the spirit. Slip behind closed doors and into the quiet seclusion of Huvafen's iconic two- and three-bedroom Pavilions – where privacy is sacred, barefoot elegance comes as standard and time moves to a rhythm entirely your own.

There's no need to leave – unless you

want to. Wake to floating breakfasts by your deck, stretch into sunrise with yoga by the sea or drift undisturbed in your private pool. From personal butlers and customised mini bars to private coral garden snorkelling and candlelit feasts, every detail is designed to help you soften, settle and come home to yourself.

Choose your sanctuary:

- Two Bedroom Ocean Pavilion with Pool Overwater

Sunset-facing. Designed for pure

immersion. This private pavilion sleeps up to six and features a unique indoor-outdoor pool that opens directly into the sea – perfect for dusk dips and slow, starlit nights.

- Two Bedroom Lagoon Pavilion with Pool

Awash in morning light, this sunrise-facing pavilion offers a front-row seat to the calm of the lagoon. With space for six, an expansive sundeck and uninterrupted water views, it invites connection and clarity.

- Three Bedroom Beach Pavilion with Pool

Set directly on the beach, this spacious, sunset-facing hideaway sleeps up to nine. Ocean views, a private pool and ample space to gather or retreat make it ideal for multigenerational escapes or milestone moments.

- Two Bedroom Beach House with Pool
- Step into your sanctuary on the sand – a private beach house where time slows and horizons expand. Spacious enough for six, this space invites you to unwind in your private pool, soak up Indian Ocean views and rediscover joy at your own pace.

- This is a stay designed for long conversations and comfortable silences. For secrets whispered over cocktails and saltwater swims that soothe. For shared laughter, solo sunrises and the rare luxury of being fully yourself. Come with friends, family or simply as you are. This isn't just a getaway. It's a return to your own tide.

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MOVERS & SHAKERS

Patina Maldives, Fari Islands Appoints Beñat Alonso as Director of Culinary

Patina Maldives, Fari Islands announces the appointment of Beñat Alonso as Director of Culinary. With over two decades of international culinary experience, including leadership roles at Michelin-starred restaurants and iconic hotels across the globe, Alonso will oversee the resort's vibrant dining program, comprising 13 distinct culinary concepts, as well as in-villa dining and the resort's sustainable farming initiatives.

Originally from the Basque Country in northern Spain, Alonso's culinary roots are grounded in a rich regional tradition where quality ingredients and a reverence for nature form the backbone of the food culture. Having trained under legendary chefs such as Martín Berasategui, and worked at esteemed establishments including

Le Manoir aux Quat'Saisons, Martin Wishart, and Pierre Koffmann, Alonso brings both classical precision and global sensibility to his role. His career has spanned the United Kingdom, Australia, Southeast Asia, and most recently included pre-opening leadership roles at Raffles Europejski Warsaw and the Four Seasons in Egypt. Commenting on the appointment, Anthony Gill, General Manager of Patina Maldives, Fari Islands, shared, "Beñat's passion, global expertise, and respect for the environment make him the ideal leader for our culinary program. Under his direction, we're confident Patina Maldives will continue to raise the bar for conscious elevated dining in the Maldives and beyond."

At Patina Maldives, Alonso brings his guiding philosophy of thought, quality,

and simplicity to life through a mindful culinary journey. With 13 distinct dining concepts on site, the resort offers one of the most diverse culinary landscapes in the Maldives, making it a natural home for his vision. From the refined Japanese-Nordic artistry of KOEN and the plant-rich elegance of ROOTS to the sun-drenched Mediterranean soul of Helios, each venue reflects a thoughtful expression of flavour, culture and craft. Under his leadership, the team also cultivates the island's organic garden, a living pantry that nourishes many of the resort's seasonal menus.

"Sustainability, ingredients, flavors, all go hand in hand," says Alonso. "At Patina, we're not just creating exceptional cuisine, we're crafting experiences that are thoughtful, rooted in nature, and shaped by our



surroundings."

From elegant fine dining to barefoot beachside bites, Patina Maldives offers a dynamic culinary journey that celebrates global flavors, local sourcing, and sustainability at its core. Alonso's leadership marks an exciting new chapter for the resort's culinary evolution.

Ram Bhoyroo Appointed General Manager of RAH GILI MALDIVES as SIX & SIX PRIVATE ISLANDS Prepares to Launch Its First Island



SIX & SIX PRIVATE ISLANDS has announced the appointment of Ram as General Manager of RAH GILI MALDIVES, the debut property in its new portfolio of lifestyle-led private islands. Scheduled to open in early 2026, RAH GILI MALDIVES represents a bold departure from conventional resort formats—one defined by rhythm, narrative, and emotional tone. Ram's appointment signals the shift from concept to experience, with his leadership anchoring the resort's transition into pre-opening and beyond.

A hospitality leader with more than two decades of experience across Mauritius and the Maldives, Ram brings a rare blend of operational discipline and cultural fluency. His background includes overseeing complex resort environments and leading high-performing teams across multiple nationalities. At RAH GILI, he is tasked not only with launching a resort, but with laying the operational foundation for a brand built on subtlety, presence, and emotional clarity.

Being first matters," Ram says. "This isn't just about preparing to open. It's about building a tone that resonates long after the first guest arrives. My focus is on creating a culture where service feels natural, energy is grounded, and the experience lives beyond the moment."

Ram's leadership is rooted in two ideas that shape the way he leads: the Power of NOW and the Magic of YES. The first is about acting with urgency—being fully present, tuned in, and ready to move when the moment calls for it. The second is about possibility—building a team culture where ideas are met with encouragement, curiosity, and action rather than hesitation.

These aren't abstract values. They define how he leads.

Each morning begins with Ram exploring the island. Not to inspect, but to connect. He prefers to read the energy of the day firsthand, meeting his team in passing moments, sensing what's unfolding before it gets written down. "You learn more from walking in a space than you do from a report," he explains. "You feel what's working and what isn't. That kind of visibility and presence shapes everything."

Ram's prior leadership brought together talent from over 20 different cultural backgrounds. His success wasn't built on uniformity—it was built on attention. On listening before directing. On creating frameworks where people could contribute authentically while staying aligned with the resort's tone. "Unity is not a by-product of systems," Ram notes. "It's the result of intentional culture—something you model, not enforce."

This is especially relevant for RAH GILI—an island shaped by feeling as much as structure. It's being built for guests who notice energy, rhythm, and emotional nuance, not just aesthetics.

From ambient soundscapes and scent rituals to guest rituals and subtle service patterns, every detail is designed to create space for reflection and resonance. Ram's leadership will ensure those elements move beyond brand decks and into daily reality. He will work closely with the resort's leadership to bring consistency across guest experience and sensory detail—ensuring the island's daily flow reflects its tone and purpose. While the brand continues to lead financial, commercial and marketing direction at a strategic level, Ram's role ensures that operational delivery and guest-facing moments remain aligned with the broader vision. His focus includes team culture and service delivery, cross-functional collaboration, and shaping an environment with positive energy and emotion work in sync.

RAH GILI MALDIVES opens in early 2026 and is positioned as the tone-setter for the SIX & SIX PRIVATE ISLANDS brand. Ram's arrival marks the beginning of daily life taking shape on the island—where tone is no longer conceptual, but carried forward in the way people lead, interact, and show up for the guest and each other.

Cocoon Maldives Appoints Abdulla Anish as Executive Assistant Manager



Cocoon Maldives has announced the promotion of Abdulla Anish to the position of Executive Assistant Manager, effective immediately. Anish, who has been a part of The Cocoon Collection family for several years, brings extensive experience and a

strong passion for hospitality to his new role. Born and raised in Addu City, Maradhoo, Anish began his career in the hospitality industry as a receptionist during the pre-opening of

The Beach House at Manafaru Maldives. Over the years, he has advanced through multiple positions, including Guest Relations Officer (GRO), Butler, Island Host, Front Office Team Leader, Assistant Front Office Manager (AFOM), Front Office Manager (FOM), and most recently, Operations Manager (OM). This diverse journey has equipped him with the knowledge and leadership skills essential for his new responsibilities.

His career reflects a commitment to hard work, dedication, and continuous growth. Known for his passion for connecting with people from different cultures and for elevating service standards, Anish has consistently inspired those around him. His approach aligns closely with The Cocoon Collection's values, making him an ideal fit for this leadership role.

As Executive Assistant Manager, Anish

will oversee various operations at Cocoon Maldives, focusing on enhancing service standards, supporting his team, and ensuring the resort's continued success. He is also deeply committed to sustainability and marine life conservation, and causes he values greatly.

In addition to his professional achievements, Anish is currently pursuing an MBA at the Faculty of Hospitality and Tourism Studies, further reflecting his dedication to continuous learning and professional development.

Commenting on the promotion, Ahmed Jihad (Jay), Chief Operating Officer of The Cocoon Collection, stated: "We are excited to have Anish take on this new role at Cocoon Maldives. His dedication to the industry, commitment to sustainability, and passion for excellence will undoubtedly contribute to the resort's continued success."



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Hospitality Through a Maldivian Lens

with

Ahmed Zahir

General Manager
Angsana Velavaru

“Hospitality is woven into Maldivian culture... These values, passed through generations, have created a natural warmth and authenticity in service. When combined with professional training, this genuine spirit allows Maldivians to deliver experiences that are heartfelt, personal, and truly unique in the global hospitality industry.”

At the very core of Maldivian hospitality lies authenticity—a form of discovery that transcends staged encounters and instead immerses guests in the true essence of the islands: its people, its culture, and its natural beauty.

Exemplifying this philosophy is Mr. Ahmed Zahir, General Manager of Angsana Velavaru, whom we proudly feature in this issue of The Islandchief. With an illustrious career spanning over 27 years, Mr. Zahir's remarkable journey—from his beginnings at Banyan Tree Vabbinfaru in 1995 to helming one of the Group's largest resorts—stands as a source of inspiration. Renowned for his people-first leadership, he has cultivated a family-like culture that has set new benchmarks in associate satisfaction and retention.

His story is one of perseverance, resilience, and unwavering dedication—qualities that continue to inspire a new generation of Maldivians striving to make their mark in the world of hospitality.

You've dedicated nearly three decades to the Banyan Tree. What has kept you loyal to one brand for so long in an industry where people often move between companies?

Banyan Tree was the first international five-star hotel to open in the Maldives, and I was fortunate to join during its early days. From the start, I experienced a service culture unlike any other—one that valued associates just as much as guests.

The company pioneered benefits well ahead of their time, such as introducing weekly days off, Rest and Recreation (R&R), sharing 100% of the service charge, providing equal food quality for all staff regardless of their job grade, and offering medical coverage. These initiatives not only set new standards for the Maldives in 1994 but also created a culture of respect and inclusivity.

Equally important was Banyan Tree's commitment to developing local talent through structured training and international exposure. This combination of care for people and investment in growth has kept me inspired and loyal throughout my career.

Angsana Velavaru emphasizes discovery beyond a typical beach escape. How do you ensure that every guest experience—from marine life to cultural immersion—feels authentic and not just curated for tourism?

We believe discovery is most meaningful when it is rooted in authenticity. Rather than staging experiences, we connect guests with the true essence of the Maldives—its people, culture, and environment.

Our marine programs, led by resident biologists, allow guests to take part in coral restoration projects and learn about biodiversity in a hands-on way. Cultural immersion is equally genuine, from visiting local islands to experiencing traditional crafts, music, and cuisine alongside the community.

What makes this unique is our focus on personal connection and storytelling. Whether it's through a dive, a cooking class, or a casual chat with a Resort Host, each interaction is designed to leave guests not just with memories but with meaningful insights and inspiration.

What do you think Maldivians uniquely bring to the hospitality industry that sets them apart from others?

Hospitality is woven into Maldivian culture. Long before tourism, it was customary to welcome visitors into one's home with food and drinks. These values, passed through generations, have created a natural warmth and authenticity in service. When combined with professional training, this genuine spirit allows Maldivians to deliver experiences that are heartfelt,

personal, and truly unique in the global hospitality industry.

Under your leadership, Angsana Velavaru achieved its highest associate satisfaction index. What do you think is the single most important factor in keeping a resort team motivated and loyal?

The foundation is our inclusive and family-like culture. Here, hierarchy fades outside the office—any associate, regardless of role or background, can approach leadership at any time. We encourage open dialogue, mutual respect, and support for one another’s work-life balance.

When people feel valued and connected, motivation and loyalty naturally follow. Our philosophy is simple: treat associates as family, and together we create a stronger, happier, and more committed team.

How do you see guest expectations in the Maldives shifting compared to 10 or 20 years ago?

Over the past two decades, guest expectations have transformed. Once a secluded paradise for honeymooners, the Maldives now welcomes families, explorers, and eco-conscious travelers. Privacy and luxury remain important, but guests increasingly seek authentic cultural immersion and sustainability-led experiences that connect them with the environment and local communities.

Technology has also reshaped how travelers plan their journeys, with growing demand for personalized, direct digital platforms.

At Angsana Velavaru, we view these shifts as opportunities. By integrating authentic Maldivian culture, sustainability, and innovation, we aim to lead the next era of Maldivian hospitality—where luxury and responsibility thrive together.

As someone who has worked across multiple departments, what do you think is the most underestimated role in a resort’s success story?

Housekeeping is, without doubt, the most underestimated role. Though it works quietly in the background, it is the foundation of a guest’s experience. A spotless room and thoughtful details create the comfort that defines a stay. Even the warmest welcome or finest meal cannot compensate for a poorly maintained room.



Housekeeping directly drives satisfaction, reviews, and repeat business. It is the silent heartbeat of hospitality, and recognizing its value is essential to delivering true excellence.

How do you balance empowering local talent while also bringing in international expertise to maintain a world-class standard?

It’s not about choosing one over the other—it’s about integration and mentorship. We identify strengths early, foster a culture of continuous learning, and empower staff to make informed decisions. Local associates bring cultural depth and authenticity, while international experts contribute global best practices and specialized skills.

By combining both, we build a workforce that is not only world-class but also uniquely Maldivian in character and spirit.

The Maldives tourism industry is highly competitive. In your view, what is the biggest challenge Maldives resorts face today, and how can leaders like yourself overcome it?

The greatest challenge is balancing sustainability with world-class guest experiences. Guests increasingly expect luxury without harming the fragile ecosystem, while resorts operate in a highly competitive market where innovation and

differentiation are critical.

Leaders must cultivate accountability and creativity within teams. This means investing in renewable energy, reducing single-use plastics, and supporting marine conservation, while also developing skilled local talent through training and mentorship. By aligning luxury with environmental responsibility, we can offer experiences that are both memorable and meaningful.

Sustainability plays a big role in your guest activities, from coral planting to marine talks. How do you measure the real impact of these initiatives on both guests and the environment?

Banyan Group, the parent company of renowned brands such as Banyan Tree and Angsana, has long been at the forefront of sustainable hospitality. Our philosophy, “Embracing the Environment, Empowering People,” shapes every aspect of our operations, spanning environmental, social, and economic dimensions.

At Angsana Velavaru, sustainability is measured through both environmental outcomes and guest engagement. We track coral growth, reef health, and energy consumption, while also gathering feedback on how these initiatives impact guest understanding and appreciation.

To ensure accountability, we have a dedicated Green Team and Sustainability Champion, with annual goals built into departmental KPIs. This creates a culture where sustainability is not a side project, but a shared responsibility. Ultimately, the real impact lies in inspiring both guests and associates to carry these values beyond the resort.

If you could give one piece of advice to your younger self when you first joined Banyan Tree in 1995, what would it be?

I would tell my younger self to set clear short- and long-term career goals early on, and to embrace every learning opportunity. Progress is best made step by step, with patience and persistence. Looking back, I realize that every experience—no matter how small—becomes part of the foundation for future growth. The key is to stay curious, committed, and always move forward.



EVENTS & AWARDS

SATA 2025 Unveils Esteemed Partners and Sets Stage for 9th Edition in Colombo, Sri Lanka

The South Asian Travel Awards (SATA) unveiled its partners for the 2025 edition at a signing ceremony and Press Meet held at Sri Lanka Institute of Tourism and Hospitality Management with Sri Lanka Tourism, SLTB, SLTDA, SLAITO, THASL. Now in its 9th year, SATA continues to celebrate excellence in South Asian tourism and hospitality, bringing together key stakeholders to honor outstanding achievements across the region.

Platinum Partner: Honda Marine

SATA proudly welcomes Honda Marine



as Platinum Partner for 2025. A global leader in marine innovation, Honda Marine delivers exceptional aquatic experiences while prioritizing sustainability and community well-being – values aligned with SATA's standards of excellence.

Gold Partners: The Hawks, Velana International Airport, Allied Insurance Company of the Maldives

The Hawks Pvt Ltd, a leading fuel importer and distributor in the Maldives, plays a vital role in supporting the region's tourism sector through reliable logistics.

Velana International Airport, the gateway to the Maldives, reinforces its commitment to world-class aviation services. Its new 72,000 sqm terminal will handle 7.5 million passengers annually, marking a major milestone for Maldivian tourism.

Allied Insurance, the leading insurer in the Maldives, backed by top global reinsurers, offers general, life, and takaful services. Their partnership ensures safety, peace of mind, and comprehensive support for the industry.

Silver Partner: Renaatus Realty

Renaatus Realty joins SATA as Silver Partner. A leader in construction and real estate development, Renaatus is redefining luxury living in the Maldives with projects like Renaatus Irumathi, blending comfort, elegance, and nature.

Hospitality Partner – Maldives: Hulhulé Island Hotel

As official Hospitality Partner in the Maldives, Hulhulé Island Hotel provided exceptional accommodation and services for SATA judges and delegates during evaluations. Located on the airport island, HIH offers seamless comfort for transit travelers, business professionals, and leisure guests.

With this distinguished lineup of partners, SATA 2025 reaffirms its position as one of South Asia's most prestigious platforms.

Sri Lanka Tourism announced that the 9th edition of SATA will take place on 19–20 September 2025 at Cinnamon Grand Colombo, Sri Lanka. The announcement was made at a press

conference on 22 August 2025, attended by key industry leaders including:

- **Mr. Buddhika Hewawasam**, Chairman of SLTDA and SLTPB
- **Mr. Nalin Jayasundera**, President of SLAITO
- **Ms. Amal Goonetilleke**, CEO of THASL
- **Mr. Ismail Hameed**, President of SATA
- **Mr. Suraj Khan**, SATA Vice President, India
- **Mr. Sampath Nishshanka**, Managing Director, Sri Lanka Tourism
- **Mr. Virosh Perera**, Director of Marketing, Cinnamon Grand Colombo

During the briefing, Mr. Buddhika emphasized the importance of regional collaboration for tourism growth.

Sri Lanka Tourism is the Destination Partner for SATA 2025, with Cinnamon Grand Colombo as the Official Host. The event is supported by a strong network of hospitality partners and endorsed by leading tourism bodies and associations across South Asia, including SLTDA, SLTPB, Nepal Tourism Board, Visit Maldives Corporation, and major travel associations such as TAAI, IATO, MATATO, CATO, ATA, THASL, SLAITO, HAN, BIHA, HRAB, NBAM, and ATTOI.





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EVENTS & AWARDS

Third Edition of Construction Industry Forum Concludes Successfully



The Construction Industry Forum 2025 (CIF'25) has successfully concluded its third edition at JEN Maldives Malé by Shangri-La. Marking another positive milestone in the construction industry with participation from high-level decision makers and key stakeholders of the construction industry. It brought together key stakeholders, and high-level personnel from various institutions, representing both the private and government sectors.

The Construction Industry Forum is organized by MEDIUM Events Pvt Ltd with endorsements from Maldives National Association of Construction Industry, highlighting its critical

importance to the local construction industry.

The Construction Industry Forum 2025 included 4 panel discussions on the following key topics:

- Panel -1 topic: Building Financial Integrity and Resilience**
Insights shared on strengthening financial practices and fostering resilience across the construction sector.
- Panel -2 topic: Workforce Managing and Policy Barriers**
The discussion examined workforce challenges and policy-related obstacles,

with emphasis on practical solutions for industry development.

Panel - 3 topic: Women in Construction
Highlighted the vital role of women and emphasized greater inclusivity and opportunities for female professionals in the sector.

Panel - 4 topic: Market Adaptation of Real Estate and Retail Construction
Experts examined shifting market demands and strategies for adapting real estate and retail construction to evolving economic trends.

In addition, the forum featured impactful keynote presentations from Foresight

Surveyors, Ooredoo Business, and Allied Insurance Company, delivering valuable insights on innovation, connectivity, and emerging industry trends. These knowledge exchanges sparked meaningful dialogue, strengthened collaboration, and contributed to the ongoing positive transformation of the construction industry in the Maldives.

Endorsed By: Maldives National Association of Construction Industry (MNACI) Sponsored by;

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Lily Beach Resort & Spa Wins Maldives' Leading All-Inclusive Resort 2025 at World Travel Awards

Lily Beach Resort & Spa Maldives has once again been crowned Maldives' Leading All-Inclusive Resort 2025 at the prestigious World Travel Awards—a testament to the resort's legacy of excellence and its standout Platinum Plan, which continues to set the benchmark for all-inclusive luxury in the Maldives.

Located in the heart of South Ari Atoll, Lily Beach offers easy access to the South Ari Marine Protected Area (SAMPA)—a hotspot for whale shark sightings and one of the best diving and snorkelling regions in the Maldives. The island's very own vibrant 360 house reef offers direct snorkelling access, giving guests the opportunity to witness rich marine life just steps from their villas.

The Platinum Plan at Lily Beach covers far more than meals—it delivers a complete, indulgent experience tailored for couples and families alike. Highlights include dining across four

- unique restaurants:
- o **Lily Maa** – International gourmet buffets with live cooking stations
 - o **Tamarind** – Elegant à la carte Indian-Thai fusion cuisine overwater
 - o **Teppanyaki at AQVA** – Interactive Japanese dining with lagoon views
 - o **Les Turquoise d'Aqua** – Exclusive fine dining with curated wine pairings

Additionally, Lily Beach is also the recipient of the Wine Spectator Award 2024. The resort's wine- cellar features an impressive selection of over 80 premium wines from around the world. Lily Beach also includes unlimited cocktails, spirits, champagnes, and specialty coffees served at Vibes Bar and AQVA Bar.

This unique Platinum Plan also includes 3 excursions for guests, from Coral Garden Snorkelling, A sunset cruise, and Big Game Fishing or Local Island visit. Guests can also enjoy daily evening entertainment on the island,



such as Live music, cultural shows, and DJ nights.

The resort's unique over-water spa, Tamara Spa offers daily yoga sessions, gym, and holistic wellness programs while the Turtle Kids' Club offers fun and educational activities for younger guests. And lastly, guests can choose from non-motorised and motorised options including jet skiing and paddleboarding.

With luxurious beachfront and overwater villas, personalised service, and one of the Maldives' most robust all-inclusive offerings, Lily Beach continues to be the go-to destination for hassle-free luxury travel. The resort's proximity to whale shark hotspots, its incredible house reef, and its culinary excellence set it apart year after year. This win at the World Travel Awards 2025 reaffirms Lily Beach's position as a leader in the Maldives hospitality sector.

EVENTS & AWARDS

Sheraton Maldives Full Moon Resort & Spa Celebrates General Manager Greg Allan’s Recognition in Travel + Leisure Asia Pacific Awards



Sheraton Maldives Full Moon Resort & Spa proudly announces that General Manager Greg Allan has been named among the winners of the “Resort General Managers – Maldives” category in the prestigious Travel + Leisure Luxury Awards Asia Pacific 2025.

Curated by the editors of Travel + Leisure Southeast Asia, Hong Kong & Macau and voted by readers worldwide, the awards celebrate excellence in travel and hospitality across the region, honoring properties and leaders who consistently deliver exceptional service, create meaningful guest experiences, and set new benchmarks for the industry.

Recognized for his outstanding leadership and people-first approach, Greg has made a significant impact since joining in October 2024. He spearheaded a landmark conservation initiative in partnership with Reefscapers, relocating five tons of endangered coral from Ras Malé to the resort’s thriving restoration site.

Under his guidance, Sheraton Maldives has strengthened its commitment to marine conservation—supporting research, educating guests, and inspiring future generations to protect the Maldives’ fragile ecosystems. He continues to champion sustainability, enrich guest experiences, and foster a warm, inclusive culture for both guests and associates.

“This recognition is truly an honor,” said Greg Allan, General Manager of Sheraton Maldives Full Moon Resort & Spa. “It’s a reflection of the incredible team I have the privilege to work with every day. Our associates bring their passion and creativity to everything they do, and it’s because of them that we can create the unforgettable moments our guests return for.”

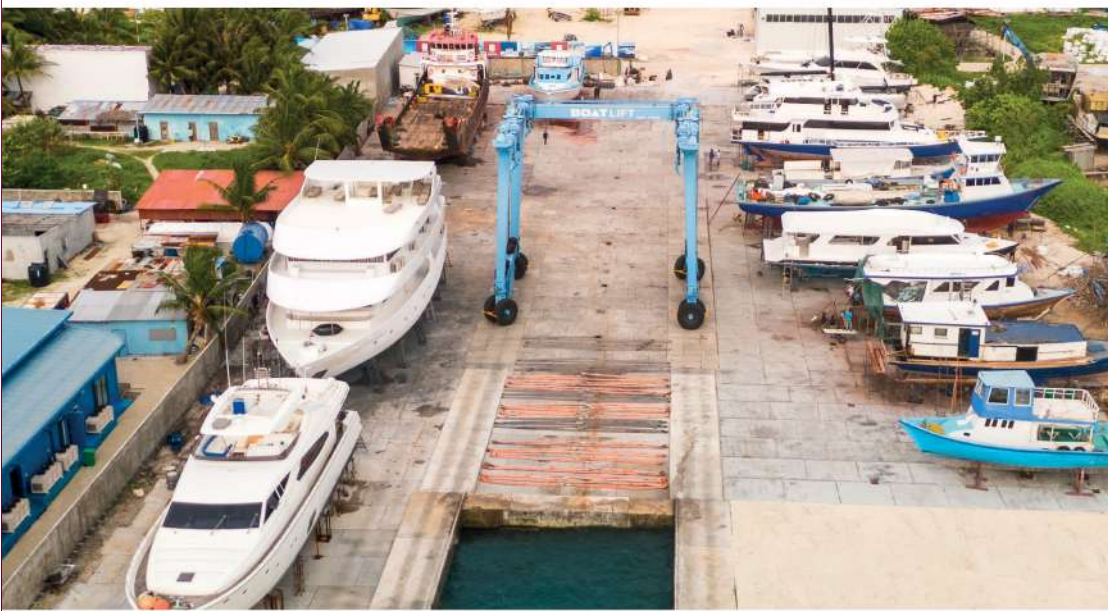
Sheraton Maldives Full Moon Resort & Spa extends a heartfelt thank you to its guests, community, and associates for their ongoing support in making this achievement possible.



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IN THE NEWS

Blood Donation Camp by IGMH at Joy Island Maldives: A Heartfelt Contribution to the Community



As part of its ongoing commitment to social responsibility and community engagement, Joy Island Maldives hosted a Blood Donation Camp in collaboration with Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital (IGMH) on August 1st, 2025. This event, a part of the Cocoon Foundation initiatives, marked a significant step in supporting local healthcare needs and reinforcing the company's commitment to giving back to the Maldivian community.

The camp saw an enthusiastic and heartwarming participation from the staff of Joy Island Maldives, who selflessly donated blood to replenish the hospital's blood banks. The employees' collective effort highlighted the island resort's culture of care, compassion, and social engagement.

The Cocoon Foundation, the philanthropic arm of The Cocoon Collection, has always focused on creating meaningful social impacts, and this event was a testament to its vision of fostering a culture of kindness and giving. The blood donation campaign aimed to address the urgent need for blood in the Maldives, ensuring that life-saving resources are available for those in need. Joy Island Maldives and its staff demonstrated their unwavering commitment to the community with this remarkable

event, which also provided an opportunity to raise awareness about the importance of blood donation and its direct impact on saving lives.

"It's heartwarming to witness our team come together for such a noble cause," said Mr Bandhula, Executive Assistant Manager of Joy Island Maldives. "Through this event, we aim to contribute to the wellbeing of the wider Maldivian community and make a positive difference, one drop at a time. We are incredibly proud of the dedication and generosity shown by our team members today."

The IGMH team, in partnership with Joy Island Maldives, efficiently coordinated the donation process, ensuring that all safety and health protocols were followed, making the experience safe and seamless for all participants.

With this initiative, Joy Island Maldives hopes to set an example for other organizations in the region, encouraging more individuals and businesses to get involved in life-saving efforts for the greater good.

The Cocoon Foundation will continue to plan and implement impactful community initiatives, supporting the health and wellbeing of local communities and contributing to building a better future for all.

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IN THE NEWS

VCL Group Leads the Way in Excellence with Landmark Housing Project in Maldives



VCL Group, a leading integrated Engineering, Procurement, and Construction (EPC) company with a distinguished legacy since 1987, proudly announces its latest milestone—constructing 11 towers in the Fahi Dhirulhum NBCC Housing Project of the FDC, marking a large residential development in the Maldives to date.

With a diverse portfolio spanning India, Maldives, and Mauritius, VCL Group has built a reputation for excellence across a wide range of sectors. From residential complexes and commercial malls to high courts, metro depots, aircraft hangars, Hospitals and roads, VCL Group’s comprehensive expertise continues to drive impactful infrastructure developments.

Founded by Mr. Varinder Garg & Lead by

Managing Director & CEO Mr. Vivek Garg, VCL Group has grown under his visionary leadership into a trusted partner for prestigious organizations like NBCC, MES, and NHAI, consistently delivering high-quality, future-ready projects across South Asia. VCL has also partnered with private developers for prestigious ultra luxury projects like Smart World’s Trump Tower-02 with 2 towers of 51 storey and 6 towers of 41 storey and 4 basements, M3M’s The Altitude which are three towers of 3 basements and 31 Floors and many more.

VCL Group is now launching one of the largest private residential projects in the Maldives, located in the vibrant and fast-developing Hulhumale’ Phase 2. Designed by World renowned architect Hafeez Contractor for modern, upscale

living, the project offers meticulously planned cross-ventilated and naturally well-lit apartments, available in 2 BHK, 2+1 BHK, and 3 BHK configurations. Each tower is equipped with six high-speed lifts, ensuring minimal wait times and maximum convenience. Residents are welcomed by luxurious entrance lobbies that set the tone for an elegant lifestyle. The project features a sprawling 15,000+ sq. ft. clubhouse with amenities like Gym, Family entertainment center, Multi-purpose Hall, Theatre, Childrens Play Area & Day care and an expansive 18,000+ sq. ft. terrace garden with a swimming pool & multiple types of Gardens perfect for leisure and social gatherings. With Premium finishes throughout & EV charging stations promoting sustainable living, this development truly redefines luxury living in the Maldives. Following are the pricing

for the same:

Configurations	Areas	Prices
	(Sqft)	(Million MVR)*
2 BHK	1035	3.62
2 BHK LARGE	1280	3.97
2+1 BHK	1340	4.56
3 BHK	1795, 1825 & 1875	6.17

*GST Extra

This ground breaking project reflects VCL Group’s commitment to redefining modern living standards while embracing sustainability, comfort, and luxury. As the company continues to expand its footprint across the Indian Ocean region, this development stands as a testament to its engineering excellence and dedication to quality.

CleanTech Maldives Hosts Successful 'Breathe Clean, Live Pure' Showcase Introducing World-Class Cleaning & Wellness Solutions



CleanTech Maldives successfully held its “Breathe Clean, Live Pure” Cleaning & Wellness Innovation Showcase on 9th August 2025 at Rivelì Beach Club, Hulhumalé. The event brought together hospitality leaders, property managers, consultants, cleaning professionals, and hygiene-conscious individuals from across the Maldives.

Guests experienced live demonstrations of advanced cleaning and wellness solutions already trusted by top hotels in Europe, Australia, and the Middle East, now introduced to the Maldives. Chief Guest Ms. Maha, Board Member of MMPRC, highlighted the importance of sustainability, hygiene, and innovation in keeping the Maldives a world-leading



luxury destination and praised CleanTech Maldives for its efforts.

The event also featured a session by Janet Smailes, Hygiene & Food Safety Consultant at FHC Maldives, who spoke about the risks of improper cleaning and chemical misuse. Attendees learned that true chemical-free cleaning is possible while reducing costs, improving staff efficiency, and creating healthier environments.

Showcased products included Medeco Cleantec’s advanced steam cleaning system for chemical-free deep hygiene, Hyla International’s water-based air purification system, and the Symbio

Harmoniser wellness solution.

A key moment was the signing of exclusive distribution agreements between CleanTech Maldives and both Medeco Cleantec GmbH and Hyla International, marking the official introduction of these global-standard technologies to the local market.

CEO Mohamed Bassam Adam shared CleanTech’s journey from its start in 2016 as the Maldives’ first eco-friendly cleaning company to its leadership during COVID-19 disinfection efforts. “Our aim is to go beyond basic cleaning,” he said, “delivering cost savings, efficiency, and top hygiene standards while enhancing the Maldives’ hospitality reputation.”

The event concluded with networking, partnership discussions, and wellness gift bags.

Siyam World contributes to initiatives that help nurture the next generation of Maldivian hospitality professionals. Encouraging curiosity, ambition and creativity among the youth today ensures that tomorrow's Maldivian tourism industry will continue to thrive with passionate and skilled leaders.

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BON APPÉTIT

Coconut Crème Brulée



Nestled on the serene island of Miriandhoo – where ‘Miri’ means coconut – our Coconut Crème Brûlée is a tribute to the island’s essence and the spirit of Ramadan. Inspired by the abundant coconut palms that have long been a cornerstone of Maldivian cuisine, this dessert blends the natural richness of coconut with the delicate indulgence of a classic French brûlée. A perfect way to end your iftar, it offers a taste of tradition with a touch of island luxury, best enjoyed under the starlit Maldivian tropical sky.

About Chef Chetan Singh

With nearly two decades of culinary expertise, Chef Chetan Singh brings passion and precision to the kitchen. He began his journey in 2004 as a Trainee Chef at Shu Jade Chinese Restaurant in Pune, India, before honing his skills across renowned hotels in Mumbai. In 2014, he took his talent international, joining Sheraton Maldives Full Moon Resort & Spa as Sous Chef.

Eager to expand his global culinary perspective, he played a key role in the pre-opening of Al Manara, A Luxury Collection Hotel in Saraya Aqaba, Jordan, as Chef de Cuisine. In April 2023, he joined The Westin Maldives Miriandhoo Resort as Head Chef, where his expertise and leadership quickly earned him the role of Chef De Tournant. Now overseeing five distinctive dining outlets, Chef Chetan ensures seamless kitchen operations while delivering exceptional dining experiences that reflect his dedication to innovation and excellence.

INGRIDENTS :

- 1 liter Coconut Milk
- 500gr Whipping Cream
- 500gr Coconut Purée
- 20 pcs Egg Yolk
- 4 pcs Whole Eggs
- 340gr Sugar
- 5gr Roasted Coconut Flakes

METHOD:

- 1 Warm the coconut milk, whipping cream, and coconut purée into a small saucepan.
- 2 Mix the egg yolks, whole eggs, and sugar into another bowl until they are well incorporated together.
- 3 Pour the warm mixture into the egg mixture and mix. Avoid bubbles.
- 4 Strain all mixture.
- 5 Pour the mixture into a ceramic bowl.
- 6 Use steam bake to cook or prepare a tray with water and keep a ceramic bowl over.
- 7 Cook at 140 degrees for 40 to 50 minutes.
- 8 Chill before serving.
- 9 Pour sugar on top and burn with a torch before serving.



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Frankly Speaking

Considering the limited direct flight connections beyond the Middle East and Asia Pacific, how achievable is the Maldives’ goal of attracting more long-haul travelers?



Mahjoob Abdulla
Head of Aviation
Voyages Maldives

To my knowledge, at the moment, there are no new airlines that have expressed interest in operating to the Maldives. However, there may be various charter operations organized by tour operators for short periods.

Another challenge faced by airlines is the increasing costs following the inauguration of the new terminal. Many existing airlines have expressed concerns, and unfortunately, MACL is not managing the situation well. One major setback is that the commercial team appears inexperienced, and their approach to these changes has been disappointing.

Jetstar initially expressed interest, but unfortunately, it has since withdrawn. According to the CAA, no other country or airline has expressed interest at this time.



Ibrahim Nizam
Tourism and Sustainability
Consultant|Destination
Marketing

It is achievable, but a well-crafted strategy for air travel and related services is essential. With prevailing circumstances, it is wise to focus on bolstering the growth of long-haul arrivals through one-stop hubs and introduce seasonal flights to long-haul destinations until we are ready for continuous operations. These hubs could be Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Doha and Singapore. Establishing strong partnerships and a great rapport with these hubs could pave the way for a long-lasting and mutually beneficial relationship.

When one-stop itineraries become steady and the destination gains its growth and popularity among travelers and holidaymakers in that region, planning for operation of direct and non-stop long-haul flights can be considered.



Ahmed Arshad
Director
Avia Maldives

The long haul market is still a smaller segment globally, which shows the challenges in developing it. However, the Maldives is very well positioned since it can be reached easily from both East and West through major connection hubs such as the UAE, Qatar, Singapore, and Thailand. These hubs play a crucial role in channeling long haul travelers into the Maldives.

Looking at our top 10 tourist markets, three countries currently have no direct flights to the Maldives, and one operates only seasonal flights. This clearly highlights how effective these connection hubs are in sustaining our arrivals. At the same time, it’s important for us to explore opportunities to initiate direct flights to these markets and assess whether existing carriers are interested in operating such routes.

While it is achievable to introduce long haul services to select European destinations, careful consideration is needed on the potential impact to existing routes that currently deliver transit passengers via major hubs.

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