

Superb diving, tropical islands and a sea so blue it hurts your eyes.
Get lost in the deep end of the less-chartered waters of the Maldives.

Remote, intimate & elegant

Right

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The turquoise waters of
the Maldives are home to
uninhabited islands aplenty

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By Miriam Cain



If you are a diver, then the chances are that you know that the Maldives is a dream destination - its coral seas have been seducing those with a sense of underwater adventure for decades. Added to that, the abundance of five star island resorts, with their dream team combination of superb comfort and pearly-white, crowd-free beaches lapped by clear seas, have attracted honeymooners from all over the world. But this remote string of coral atolls lying in the middle of the Indian Ocean have more recently caught the attention of a number of superyacht owners who are leaving behind the beaten track of the Caribbean and heading to the Maldives either as part of a round-the-world tour or as a destination in itself.

The turquoise waters are home to uninhabited islands, pristine beaches, amazing wildlife and sheltered superyacht anchorages a-plenty. Around one in ten of the 1,190 coral islands are inhabited by luxury resorts and aboard a superyacht you can easily flit from resort to resort, en route exploring uninhabited islands, remote dive sites and fishing grounds that are inaccessible to all but the water traveller. From relaxing on deck to sunbathing on the beach to diving, fishing, and all manner of water sports, the Maldives lends itself to a variety of activities aboard and ashore.

Step aboard your yacht in the Port of Malé, cruise through to the North Malé Atoll, and anchor off the boutique island resort of Baros. Celebrating its 40th anniversary this year, the resort is still owned by the same Maldivian family who opened it in 1973. What was then a simple thatch hut and coconut palm castaway island has become 75-villas, three gourmet restaurants, and an award winning spa. Step ashore and dine in the tropical gardens of the Lighthouse Restaurant. Acclaimed to be one of the best in the Maldives, the Lighthouse culinary delights include freshly caught reef fish prepared Maldivian style with spiced kaffir lime leaves. Spend the afternoon at the boutique spa. The treatment menu includes holistic and Ayurveda options, but the Baros Signature Combination is the most popular.

After a night back on board rise early and jump in to explore the underwater world around Kihadhuffaru Thila. The waters are



Clockwise from top left

— Water villas; dining at Baros is a unique experience; snorkel the coral atolls of the Maldives; the coconut palm castaway island of Baros boasts 75-villas; experience the award-winning spa on Baros

teeming with stingrays and nurse sharks. Enjoy a hearty breakfast at anchor outside the Kudarikilu lagoon, before taking the tender to the islands inside the lagoon for an insight into the local way of life. Discover the village markets where locals weave traditional Thun'du kunaa mats.

Freshen up for lunch whilst your crew set up loungers on the uninhabited island of Gemendhoo. Enjoy a barbecue of the catch of the day on your own desert island. Fishing is a way of life in the Maldives and from the decks of



your yacht you can fish for dogtooth tuna, salt fish, Wahoo and red snapper as they mill just beneath the surface. Spend the afternoon on deck spotting one of the thirty or so species of whale and dolphin as they bask in the shallow waters of the atolls before leaving early evening to feed offshore at night. Enjoy another dinner ashore by fire torchlight or dine on board.

Following a few days in the Baa Atoll, cruise on to neighbouring Raa Atoll. Rise before sunrise and practice yoga on one of the deserted sandbanks set in the middle of the ocean while

ABOARD A
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the sun's rays break through dawn to greet the day. Discover the famous heritage site Redhinge Usgandu on the island of Ugulu. Cruise on and dive in the waters surrounding Vaadhoo Faru. Numerous anchorages that also double up as great fishing spots surround the island. Step ashore onto the neighbouring island of Alifushi where you will find a traditional boat-building village.

From the Raa Atoll, cruise on to the Shaviyani Atoll. The island of Maroshi is home to the historic Haani Tree - a famous landmark





Clockwise from top left

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Spend a few days ashore at the One & Only Rheeti Rah; enjoy a barbecue set up by the crew on your own desert island; Rheeti Rah is the ultimate fantasy island; discover uninhabited island after island

dating back to the days of the Utheemu brothers and their struggle against the Portuguese. The Maldives have been home to a diverse range of cultures and a rich cultural heritage. Their position in the middle of the Indian Ocean and their calm waters meant that they provided the perfect sheltered anchorage for the Persians travelling on their trade route from India to Indonesia. The Africans, British and Portuguese, all who have left their mark on the islands, followed the Persians here.

After a dose of culture ashore, move on to the Haa Daalu Atoll for more great dive spots, including a number of unique wreck dives. Known as the graveyard of several ships, Maamakunudhoo in the southeast of the atoll has the wreck of the Persia Merchant, which sank in 1658, and the Hayston, which was wrecked in 1819.

Cruise north towards the Haa Alif Atoll. The archipelago is home to Utheemu - the birthplace of the legendary hero Sultan Mohamed Thakurufaanu who freed the nation from the Portuguese. Following a few days exploring the northern-most atoll, overnight cruise to the Shaviyani Atoll for more great diving before moving on to the Lhaviyani Atoll. Here you can spend a night ashore in a local home on the island of Naifaru, dine at the Kanuhura resort, or simply discover uninhabited island after island.

As you come to the end of your cruise through the atolls of the Maldives, spend another few days back in the Baa Atoll diving amongst the grey reef sharks and barracudas. Step ashore to the Soneva Fushi Resort & Spa and enjoy an afternoon of pampering before cruising through the Malé Atoll for your final few days on board. Disembark in Malé or extend your stay in the Maldives with a few days at the One & Only Rheeti Rah. A favourite stop on the cruising map, Rheeti Rah is the ultimate fantasy island.

For further information on chartering in the Maldives contact your nearest Camper & Nicholsons' charter broker, see page 6.

