

Maldives

June 2012

To say I was excited to be offered an inspection trip to the Maldives was an understatement, this is one destination I have always wanted to visit and I was being given the opportunity to see these stunning islands for myself. I wanted to see if these islands really are how they look in the brochures and if I would truly fall in love with this destination or if I would find them too quiet and would I be bored after 1 day.

My perception of what the Maldives was going to be like was beautiful unspoilt white sandy beaches, stunning turquoise waters, amazing marine life for diving and snorkelling and pure relaxation. I thought it was a destination mainly for couples and honeymooners who are happy to relax and enjoy the beautiful surroundings of these amazing islands and want time away from the outside world.



So did the Maldives live up to my expectations and this report describes what I saw and what I thought.....

The Maldives is very accessible from the UK with British Airways flying direct twice a week from London Gatwick, there is a weekly charter or you can fly via Doha, Colombo or Dubai which is a great opportunity for you to consider a if you a two centre holiday. Christmas shopping and beach for example

The direct flight is 10 hours and arrives into Male airport which is the capital Island. From here you either get a seaplane or speedboat transfer to the island you are staying on depending how far away they are. I experienced both speedboat and seaplane transfers and highly enjoyed both, the speedboat is great fun and you get to see different islands on the way. The speedboats are used when the islands are 30-40 minutes away from the Male and are a quick and easy way to reach your island. These are generally less expensive then seaplane transfers so if you are trying to keep your cost down then a closer island will be better value. I have to say I did prefer the seaplanes as the views from up above are truly stunning and I was left wide mouthed as I have never seen anything so beautiful. The aircrafts are small 15 seater planes and can be slightly noisy but great fun. Most of the transfer times are between 30-45 minutes. Once landed into Male you are transferred to the seaplane terminal by bus and wait for your seaplane departure in a small private terminal, most islands have their own lounge where they offer complimentary drinks and snacks and the connection times are good



LUX

The first island of our trip was LUX formally Naiade located in the South Ari Atoll 35 minutes by seaplane from Male airport.

LUX is very eco friendly and most of their produce is grown on the island, they even have their own herb garden growing fresh products. The island is 2km long and would take around 30 minutes to walk all the way around it although there are golf buggies that pick you and take you to where ever you want to go if you are feeling lazy!

LUX is a very lush resort with lots of palm trees and beautiful white sandy beaches. The infinity swimming pool is a lovely way to spend lazy days or on one of the many soft white sandy beaches. The snorkelling is fantastic and we did a boat trip and were very lucky to see a whale shark plus many more amazing fishes which was a definite highlight of the whole trip. I was surprised by how fantastic the marine life was here and the beautiful colours of all the fish really are amazing. This is a must do at LUX even if you are a first time snorkeler or don't feel confident in deep water as the staff go with you and stay with you if required and provide lifejackets



We were very lucky to stay in one of the water villas which were very nice; you could go straight off the decking of your villa into the sea for a swim or snorkel. All the rooms here were a very good standard although I personally preferred the beach villas as you had your own private beach area in front of your villa to relax and also could get straight into the sea.

They have three restaurants all available on half board, a gorgeous spa and many other activities such as tennis courts, gym, and table tennis etc. There is also a children's club catering for children from 2-12years and a teen club for 13-17years.

I would say LUX is perfect if you wanted a slightly bigger island with plenty of activities and facilities on site. It is a very family friendly island and would suit all child ages. This is ideal if you want lazy days enjoying the beautiful scenery but the option to do more if you wanted. I would happily book this resort for a family or just as a couple if I wanted to get away from it all as you would never feel the island is busy as you don't tend to see many people.



Centara Grand Island Resort

Our second island of the trip the Centara Grand Island resort. We arrived here by speedboat from LUX although this would normally be a 30 minute seaplane from Male airport.

I was surprised how different this island was from LUX, the people, the feel of the place and overall atmosphere was different. Centara Grand is an All Inclusive island and was a lot busier than LUX. There were lots of people around and the island had a real buzz to it where as LUX has quieter and felt more relaxed.



The island itself is smaller than LUX although still has 3 restaurants, a swimming pool, gym, spa, water sports and kids club so plenty of things to do. We stayed in a beach villa which was very nice with the bedroom on a split level and an outdoor shower. The villas are located right on the beach front and are either sunset or sunrise. We looked at the two different water villas although I personally felt the luxury sunset villas needed to be refurbished as they were starting to look tatty in places and for the additional supplement they were charging I did not think it was worth the extra

The beach here was lovely and a couple of the group went snorkelling off the beach which they said was very good and saw some amazing marine life.

The food here was excellent, we ate in the Thai restaurant in the evening which I have to say was very nice and one of the best Thai meals I have ever had. Lunch was in the main buffet restaurant which was good although very Asian orientated with lots of noodles and rice.

I enjoyed my stay at Centara Grand although being an Asian brand I felt the island was very geared towards the Asian market and was popular with Chinese guests. It is good value for money as an All Inclusive which showed in how much busier the island was compared to LUX. This is a 4 star island which I felt showed in some of the rooms and service around the resort. Grand Centara is great if you want an all inclusive with a busy atmosphere and I would recommend this for groups and families who would like lots of activities.



Kanahura

A 35 minute seaplane transfer from Male airport and we arrive at the beautiful island of Kanahura. We were welcomed by a team of staff who greeted us with cool towels and refreshments.

As we stepped onto the island from the seaplane jetty I have blown away with how beautiful Kanahura is. The beach was the best I had seen yet, very wide and soft white powered sand.

We stayed in a water villa which were gorgeous and over looked the Indian ocean. They have a large decking area with a hammock over the sea. They were very private so you could not see other people on neighbouring villas. They only have beach villas and water villas, the beach villas are lovely decorated and have outside showers with direct beach access.

The facilities here are fantastic and to a very high standard. The kids club is one of the best I have seen and is very well equipped with lots of facilities and educational programme to keep the little ones amused. The spa is lovely and very relaxing and we were lucky to enjoy a Thai massage in one of the beautiful rooms.

The food is exquisite and I had amazing sushi for lunch and then a wonderful candlelit dinner on the beach on the evening. The prices here include breakfast although you can pay a supplement for evening meals.

There are many boat trips available and we were lucky to be taken out on a dolphin trip where we got to see dolphins in their natural environment. This was amazing and well worth going on as we were treated to music, champagne and canapés. Kanahura also has its own private island where you can go by speedboat for the day. The island is very quiet and you can stay and enjoy some lunch in the islands restaurant

Kanahura is a luxurious island and is perfect for anyone looking for a high quality resort with outstanding food and service. I would recommend this for couples and honeymooners looking for a romantic holiday as the attention to detail is superb and you are made to feel very special.



Dusit Thani

The fourth island Dusit Thani is reached by sea plane from Male airport. This is a brand new resort and only recently opened earlier this year so everything was brand new. The island was very quiet so felt very relaxing and plenty of space to get away and chill on your own.

The Devarana spa is the best spa I have seen in the Maldives. The spa is built in the tree tops and has 6 tree top treatment pods overlooking the island and the views are absolutely stunning. This spa was simply beautiful and would be lovely to enjoy a relaxing treatment whilst away.

Dusit Thani has a very Thai feel to it. The style of the rooms, restaurant and spa are very Thai orientated. The staff are very friendly although most are of them are Thai nationality. The service was excellent here and we had dinner in their Thai restaurant overlooking the sea which had amazing views and you can enjoy a cocktail whilst watching the sunset.

The Dusit Thani has a fantastic dive centre and house reef so is great if you want to dive or snorkel as the marine life is fantastic. We got to see Manta-rays, turtles and other colourful fish and fantastic you can just swim off the beach or from your water villa.

I would recommend this island to couples looking for a luxury relaxing resort with its own house reef, good quality food and fabulous spa and again would be perfect for a honeymoon couple or someone celebrating a special anniversary or birthday.



Coco Palm Body Hithi

Our final island of the trip was Coco Palm Body Hithi. We transferred back to Male and was taken to the speedboat terminal where we had a 40 minute boat transfer to the island.

We arrived just as the sun was setting and the view was truly beautiful. The island has a very up market feel with a relaxing atmosphere. Lots of guests were relaxing in cabanas around the pool and bar and watching the lovely sunset.

The facilities and activities are excellent and the spa was absolutely beautiful. The beach is very wide and has plenty of space for sunbathing.

There are 56 water villas on Coco Palm and only 44 beach villas. The rooms are the best I had seen the whole trip. The beach villas were huge with a massive bath tub right in the middle of the room which was very unique and very romantic.



Overall summary

This was a fantastic trip and I was very lucky to be given the opportunity to visit such a beautiful place. I would highly recommend the Maldives as an exotic beach destination for anyone especially couples, honeymooners & families and anyone looking for a totally relaxing holiday.

There is things to do if you don't just want a beach destination but the main attraction is the wonderful marine life and is perfect if you like to scuba dive or snorkel.

I believe the Maldives is a once in a lifetime holiday and is ideal if you are celebrating a special occasion such as a honeymoon, anniversary or special birthday.

All of the islands are very different so it is important the right island is booked although all of them are stunning and offering a relaxing beach holiday. I would highly recommend an island reached via a sea plane as the views from up above are breathtaking and I would find it difficult to go anywhere else in the world where you can see such stunning scenery.

Although the Maldives is expensive it is worth it because the beaches, marine life and stunning views are like no else in the world and I would highly recommend this to anyone.

Please call Tina at the Wickford office on 01268 735301 to discuss further.



