

Maldives, Central Atolls & Baa

7 / 10 nights Itinerary

- **Embarkation:** Malé International Airport*
- **Disembarkation:** Hulhumalé Harbour, Malé @ 08:00

Embarkation & Disembarkation Transfers

*Our meeting point for embarkation is in front of Burger King in the airport terminal where our representative will be waiting to collect you and holding a Master Liveboards sign.

- There are two transfer times for embarkation in Malé - **12:30 and 16:00 only**

At these two times only, the dhoni will dock at the pier in front of the airport and transfer guests directly to Blue Voyager.

PLEASE NOTE: *We can not arrange pick-up and transfers from hotels.* Guests staying in a hotel or resort before their liveaboard need to arrange transport to be at the airport in time for the 12:30 transfer to Blue Voyager.

Disembarkation day transfer is also by dhoni from Blue Voyager to the airport only.

Diving Information

Please be aware that *some of the dive sites* that may be included on this itinerary can **have strong and unpredictable currents** making them challenging or unsuitable for novice or inexperienced divers.

All divers are required to use a dive computer and carry an SMB and reel on every dive.

Minimum dive certification and experience:

Divers joining a Central Atolls & Baa liveaboard itinerary are required to have:

- PADI **Open Water certification**, or equivalent
- A **minimum of 30 logged dives**
- **Nitrox certification*** is highly advantageous and **strongly recommended**.
*We offer SSI Nitrox certification onboard for those not already certified.

Ideally, you should also have previous experience in currents and be comfortable with drift dives, negative entries and deploying an SMB underwater.

Guests who the crew feel have insufficient experience or fitness for the diving conditions may be denied participation in some or all dives.

All divers are responsible for their own dive profiles and must remain well within the limits of their dive computer and certification. Guests are also required to follow the instructions of the cruise director and guides and make a safety stop at the end of each dive.

It is a mandatory requirement for all divers to have insurance which covers scuba diving activities, including emergency evacuation and recompression chamber costs.

Diving Emergencies

The largest and longest operating recompression chamber is on Bandos Island (15 minutes by speedboat from Malé). The others are located at Kuredu Island Resort (Lhaviyani Atoll), Kuramathi Resort (North Ari Atoll), Kandima Maldives Resort (Dhaalu Atoll) and ADK Hospital in Malé.

IMPORTANT: Transfer to the nearest available chamber is likely to require emergency evacuation by speedboat, which needs to be paid for at the time it is required. *It is your responsibility to ensure that your insurance will fully cover and reimburse all evacuation costs as well as recompression chamber and/or hospital treatment.*

We strongly urge all guests to dive conservatively at all times, follow Dive Guides' advice and purchase specific dive insurance before their trips.

As outlined in our [Terms & Conditions](#) dive insurance and travel insurance are mandatory.

Water Temperature and Exposure Suits

Water temperatures throughout the Maldives are fairly constant at 26°-29°C (78°-84°F) throughout the year. Most guests are comfortable in a 3mm shorty or full-length wetsuit. However, those who are prone to feeling cold may be more comfortable in a 5mm suit. Guests who are prone to feeling cold are advised to bring additional thermal layers such as a vest, hood or skinsuit to wear under their wetsuit.

Itinerary Details

Participation in this liveaboard itinerary is subject to acceptance of our Terms & Conditions as outlined here: www.masterliveaboards.com/terms-conditions.

Our Central Atolls and Baa itineraries take you to some of the best dive sites around the central atolls of the Maldives and Baa Atoll. The diving locations depend largely on the itinerary duration and include North and South Malé, Baa and Raa atolls. On 10-night itineraries, North & South Ari, Rasdhoo and Vaavu Atolls will also usually be covered.

Fees & Taxes:

Maldives Government Green Tax is mandatory and must be paid in advance as part of your liveaboard booking.

An **entrance fee of 30 USD per person** applies if it is possible to visit [Hanifaru Bay](#) during your trip. This is a government-controlled charge, **payable on board, in USD cash only**, and is subject to change without notice.

Please note however that ***inclusion of Hanifaru Bay is not guaranteed*** and will depend on season, presence of mantas, and government-imposed visitor restrictions.

Number of scheduled dives:

- 7 nights: Up to 16
- 10 nights: Up to 25

While we endeavour to ensure the number of scheduled dives is fulfilled, this is only indicative, and not guaranteed. Various factors can hinder the vessel's ability to reach or remain at a specific area and may affect the number of dives possible.

Safety and dive briefings are conducted in English. If you or any of your group do not speak or fully understand English, please contact us.

The following is an example of the day-to-day itinerary.

Day 1: Meet our crew at Malé Airport for embarkation which is followed by introductions, boat orientation, safety briefings and dinner. There is no diving on embarkation day.

Full diving days: We typically offer 3 dives a day on full diving days, scheduled as follows unless travelling distances or other circumstances dictate otherwise:

- Light Breakfast followed by a briefing & Dive 1
- Full Breakfast, relaxation period, briefing & Dive 2
- Lunch, relaxation period, briefing & Dive 3*
- Snack, relaxation period
- Dinner

* if [snorkelling at Hanifaru Bay](#) is possible there will only be 2 dives offered on that day. On other days, if it is possible to offer a sunset or night dive, the normal scheduling will be slightly amended.

Last diving day: For your last day of diving we usually schedule two morning dives* before the boat heads back to port after lunch.

*Guests are kindly asked to check their flight departure time to ensure a minimum of 24 hours between their final dive and flying.

Disembarkation day: Early breakfast on board followed by disembarkation and transfer to the airport at 08:00.

Following is an indication of the areas that are covered on the Central Atolls and Baa itineraries which are dictated by the itinerary duration. While we wish to show you the very best diving possible, a number of factors can determine which sites we visit. Weather, tides, currents and marine life activity are just some of the considerations which determine the Cruise Director's and Captain's decision of which route the boat takes and which sites are selected for diving.

The safety of all on board is paramount and we always do our best to offer diving at alternative locations should we be unable to visit any of the sites listed below, for any reason.

North Malé Atoll

H.P. Reef

Also known as Rainbow Reef or Girifushi Thila, this is a marine protected area and a truly exceptional dive site with an abundance of soft corals and interesting features. As the thila is located in the middle of a channel, *currents are to be expected and are often strong*.

The southwest section of the thila features numerous coral outcrops, caves and crevices; A large rock formation separated from the reef by a narrow, sandy channel on the northwest side drops steeply from 15 to 24 metres where you will find a large cave with a chimney swim-through leading back up to the top of the rock. Marine life includes sharks, eagle rays, stingrays as well as large schools of pelagic and reef fish.

Lankan Manta Point

Starting at a depth of around 7 metres, a group of large coral rocks along the outside reef of Lankanfinolhu act as a cleaning station where mantas can be consistently observed throughout the year as they stop by to be serviced by the resident blue-stripe cleaner wrasse. As the mantas awaiting their turn to be cleaned circle above, those that are done fly away down the reef scooping up mouthfuls of zooplankton in the shallows as they go.

Lankan Caves

Roughly 200 metres from Manta Point, on the southern tip of Lankanfinolhu Reef, a series of caves and overhangs ranging in depth from 5 metres down to 30 metres along a steep wall provide interesting nooks and crannies to investigate. Large table corals cover the top of the reef where schools of damselfish and sweetlips gather. Sharks, turtles, stingrays and Napoleon wrasse are just a few of the other creatures that often frequent the area.

Rasfari North Corner

At Rasfari on the western side of North Malé Atoll, we dive along the outside reef and around the corner into the channel. Depths range from 8 to 30 metres with overhangs, coral blocks and white sandy patches adding to the points of interest. In the blue and along the reef we often see white-tip, black-tip and grey reef sharks, barracuda, rays and large numbers of sweetlips. Turtles and Napoleon wrasse are also common sightings.

Baa Atoll

Encompassing 54 islands of South Maalhasmaddu and Goidhoo Atoll, Baa is best known for [Hanifaru Bay](#) where large numbers of manta rays congregate to feed at certain times of the year when high tides and strong currents bring nutrient-rich waters into the bay around full and new moon phases. However, like the majority of Maldivian atolls, Baa features many channels, walls and reefs providing numerous dive sites offering steep drop-offs, overhangs, caves, abundant coral and fish life, sharks and eagle rays, as well as mantas. Sites we usually visit in Baa Atoll include the following:

Dhigala Haa

This beautiful thila inside the atoll is easily circumnavigated in one dive and is a favourite for eagle rays and grey reef shark sightings. Once heavily fished, it is now a protected marine sanctuary; as a result, fish life is prolific and varied with blue fin jacks, fusiliers, blue-striped and humpback snapper, batfish and schools of barracuda.

Dhonfanu Thila

A relatively small, oval-shaped pinnacle with an almost completely flat reef top covered with beautiful hard corals between 8 and 10 metres and steep, soft coral-covered walls reaching down to 30 metres. Topographically, there are numerous overhangs, drop-offs, caves and canyons dotted around the entire circumference and a delightful swim-through on the east side. All along the reef, you will see schools of blue-striped snappers, fusiliers, soldierfish and butterflyfish. Look out for stingrays in the sandy areas as well as grey reef sharks and eagle rays passing by. The reef is also full of cleaner wrasse, so mantas often visit during the southwest monsoon season.

Dharavandhoo Thila

Starting as a narrow ledge from the corner of Dharavandhoo Island and extending almost 200 metres into the atoll, this dive site comprises many features with stunning topography offering underwater photographers the opportunity for some amazing aquatic landscape shots.

In the shallowest area, close to the middle of the thila, you can find octopus, scorpionfish, stonefish, different types of moray eels and a variety of macro delights. Along the entire length on both sides, there are coral blocks, crevices, overhangs, sea fan filled caves and sandy patches which come to life with garden eels popping out of their burrows to feed on water-borne nutrients while gobies, together with their resident partner shrimps, work tirelessly to clean and guard their homes.

A cleaning station at 20 metres attracts mantas during the Southwest monsoon, usually between June and October. Regular marine life encounters include eagle rays, stingrays, groupers, barracuda and Napoleon wrasse, to name just a few.

Dhigu Thila

Approximately 500 metres in length, Dhigu Thila is another long, narrow reef. Resembling an underwater mountain range, distinct peaks and canyons form a chain that is little more than 6 metres wide. The flat 'mountain' tops range in depth from 6 to 11 metres and are separated by canyons roughly 15 metres deep.

The southern side drops steeply to around 25 metres and is dotted with large caves filled with sea fans and whip corals where groupers, squirrelfish and numerous smaller fish can be found hiding. The northern side descends more gradually in tiers down to the same depth and features vertically stacked caves at the eastern end and an isolated outcrop reef. Apart from the topography, the thila boasts some amazing marine life; look out for octopus, flatworms, nudibranchs, scorpionfish, and black-spotted stingrays.

Hanifaru Bay (inclusion not guaranteed)

Scuba diving is not permitted in Hanifaru Bay. Snorkelling is allowed, but visitors must be escorted by an official Hanifaru Bay guide.

Hanifaru is an uninhabited island located on the southeast side of Baa Atoll. The bay is a marine protected area, famed for the large number of manta rays that congregate there at certain times of the year. This seasonal gathering is due to plankton blooms in and around the bay, a phenomenon that normally occurs between June and October. When conditions are just right, there can be up to 200 manta rays feeding off the reefs in Hanifaru Bay.

PLEASE NOTE: The inclusion of Hanifaru Bay is dependent on the time of year, the number of mantas in the bay (or lack thereof) as well as the availability of government-licensed guides and restrictions imposed by the rangers.

There is a visitor **charge of 30 USD per person** which covers entry token and guide fees for approximately 45 minutes. Minimum 10 people. This **fee is payable on board in USD cash only**.

Raa Atoll

Just 5km north of Baa Atoll across Hani Kandu, Raa Atoll contains a high density of reefs and thilas with caves, overhangs and drop-offs providing stunning underwater scenes of abundant marine life with colourful corals, huge numbers of reef fish and a variety of pelagics including mantas and whale sharks in the Summer months.

Alifushi Caves

Alifushi is a small, isolated island at the most northern point of the region encompassed by Raa Atoll. The ocean-facing reef wall on the southern side of the island is punctuated by amazing overhangs and caves ranging in depth from 15-30 metres. The wall is adorned with soft corals, which entice green turtles and accommodate commensal shrimps and crabs. Stingrays and eagle rays also frequent the area and, if you can tear your eyes away from the beautiful wall and caves, there's always the possibility of spotting sharks and other pelagics passing by in the blue.

Kottafaru Thila

This oval-shaped thila sits at a maximum depth of 30 metres reaching up to a flat reef top at 10 metres. ***Currents are often strong, which can be challenging*** but, the rewards are worth it. The sides of the thila drop off steeply from 12 metres to the ocean floor and feature caves and overhangs on all sides providing shelter for fish, rays and nurse sharks. Amongst the corals and crevices, you will find a variety of moray eels, often being serviced by cleaner shrimp. Black coral bushes and sea anemones add colour and beauty to the site, along with large groups of golden trevally, fusiliers, butterfly fish, damsels and chromis.

Ifuru Kuda Thila

This small, circular thila is located in the channel just off the northern tip of Ifuru Island on the east side of Raa Atoll. ***Currents flowing around the thila can be strong*** making it best suited to divers with experience in similar conditions. The 10-12 metres deep reef-top overlooks an encompassing plateau at a depth of 17-22 metres which forms the top of a sheer wall to the 30-metre deep sea bed. Colourful soft corals create a stunning vista with bannerfish, rainbow runners, snappers and small reef fish creating a kaleidoscopic tableau.

South Malé Atoll

Cocoa Corner

Cocoa Corner consists of a gently sloping reef from 5-30 metres on the outer edge of the channel which transitions into a steep wall leading into the atoll. The wall section nearest to the corner features many caves and overhangs which are adorned with a variety of soft and hard corals, sea fans and sponges. Inside the channel itself, you will find some coral blocks at 20-30 metres where octopuses can often be found. Other regular sightings here include turtles, eagle rays, surgeonfish and of course, there are also reef sharks.

Kandooma Thila

Located inside the channel from Cocoa Corner, the *reef is subject to strong currents* at times. The ocean currents carry a lot of nutrients, supporting an abundance of sea life. The 300-metre long, teardrop-shaped thila boasts prolific fish life and beautiful underwater scenery and is considered by some to be one of the best dive sites in South Malé Atoll. It is renowned for its soft coral growth, turtles, diverse fish life and invertebrates found on the reef top. Along the reef slope, you may also find black snapper, blue-fin jacks, sharks and eagle rays.

Guraidhoo Kandu

Guraidhoo Kandu is part of a protected marine area that also encompasses Lhosfushi Kandu and Medhu Faru which separates the two channels and is an area renowned for sightings of sharks and schools of eagle rays. Occasionally, sailfish and hammerheads may also be seen although this is a rare treat rather than a guarantee.

Most of the pelagic species can be observed around the channel opening where the reef drops off into the deep open-ocean. The best conditions to dive here are on an incoming current, beginning on the outer reef and going with the flow into the channel. Along the reef inside the channel features overhangs with plenty of soft coral growth and small fish.

Lhosfushi / Medhu Faru

When the conditions are conducive to doing so, we usually combine Lhosfushi and Medhu Faru in one dive, although the nature and direction of the dive are dependent on currents, or lack thereof. Normally we dive here on an incoming current, starting on the outside reef at Lhosfushi and crossing the narrow channel opening, then drift with the current to finish the dive in the channel on the south side of Medhu Faru.

The outside reef at Lhosfushi is a steep slope where reef sharks, turtles, eagle rays and Napoleon wrasse can usually be found as well as a variety of eels, leaf fish, blue triggerfish and big schools of jacks hanging around the corner.

Medhu Faru separates Lhosfushi Kandu from Guraidhoo Kandu and is possibly one of the most scenic dives you will experience in the Maldives. Around the corner area of Medhu Faru at the channel entrance, a series of overhangs and blocks adorned with sea fans and soft corals play host to groups of reef fish, shrimps and eels.

10-night itineraries

The following areas will usually only be included on 10-night itineraries

North Ari Atoll

Fish Head

Fish Head, also known as Shark Point or Mushimasmingili Thila, fits the classic definition of a thila; Roughly 80 metres wide, this isolated pinnacle rises steeply from a depth of 40+ metres to form a flat-topped reef, 10 metres below the surface. The underwater scenery, along with a wide variety of marine life and large numbers of grey reef sharks have earned it a reputation as one of the top ten dive sites in the Maldives. It features a series of caves

and ledges at varying depths and a large undercut between 25-30 metres and can easily be circled in a single dive if the currents are favourable.

Maaya Thila

Where Fish Head is known as one of the best locations for grey reef shark encounters, Maaya Thila boasts the same with white-tip reef sharks. Grey reef sharks are also present but are largely outnumbered by the white-tip population. Maaya is very similar in size and topography to Fish Head although slightly shallower. Apart from the sharks, there is plenty of fish activity to feast your eyes on; turtles, dog-toothed tuna, great barracuda, Moorish idols, batfish, parrotfish, butterflyfish, angelfish, clown triggerfish, lionfish, fusiliers, snappers, along with soft corals and sea fans add a rainbow of colour to the reef.

Rasdhoo-Madivaru

The Rasdhoo region is a small atoll in its own right but is classified as part of Alifu Alifu Atoll with Rasdhoo Island being North Ari's administrative capital. Rasdhoo-Madivaru is a channel on the southeastern edge of the Rasdhoo region which is famed for the large groups of Scalloped hammerhead sharks that emerge from the depths just before sunrise. The reef formation in this area is possibly one of the most stunning and confusing in the whole of North Ari.

A narrow spur, peaking at around 12 metres, extends outwards from the reef into the channel between Madivaru and Rasdhoo Islands. On the open ocean-facing side, the reef drops off to more than 200 metres while the sandy bottom inside the channel is around 30 metres. There is a prolific amount of fish life around the spur ranging from pelagics such as barracuda, tuna and trevallies to colourful reef fish in all shapes and sizes.

Fesdhoo Lagoon

Inside the atoll, Fesdhoo Lagoon is an area where manta rays often congregate in the late afternoon and evening to feed. To enable our guests to experience these magnificent creatures up close, the crew will attach lights to the stern of the boat which attracts plankton and, hopefully, mantas too. If the mantas put in an appearance, divers will have the opportunity to make a stationary night dive at the back of the boat to passively observe the rays while they are feeding.

South Ari Atoll

South Ari boasts numerous superb thilas, most of which are located in the channels from the outside reefs, although there are several inside the atoll as well. You will have the opportunity to dive at several of these while we are in South Ari and some of the manta cleaning stations that the atoll is famed for. The locations that we visit depend on the time of year as this dictates where the best action is likely to be. These may include some or all of the following:

Rangali Madivaru

In Dhivehi, Madi means "ray" and Faru, or Varu, means long reef; Between December and April, this is a superb location for manta ray activity. As with many good manta points, the reef slopes steadily downwards from its top at 8 metres to the atoll floor at 30 metres. In addition to numerous cleaning stations along the reef slopes, there are overhangs, caves, a couple of swim-throughs and plenty of other marine life including schools of blue-striped and midnight snappers, surgeonfish, squirrelfish, Napoleon wrasse and sharks.

Kudarah Thila

Located inside a large channel, Kudarah Thila is a small, isolated reef which is covered in beautiful soft and hard corals, teeming with fish and one of the most colourful dives in Ari Atoll. The top of the thila is 14-16 metres deep and drops off sharply to 27 metres all the way around. If the current is not too strong, it's possible to navigate the entire thila in one dive and explore the top of the reef for macro species. Around the eastern end, there is a swim-through and two large overhangs decorated with yellow daisy corals on the ceilings and giant gorgonians on the floors. Thousands of blue-lined snappers surround the reef, as well as large schools of humpback red snappers and bannerfish. Grey reef sharks are also regularly seen cruising the peripheries.

Maamigili Beru

On the southern tip of South Ari, Maamigili is best known for whale sharks which can be seen in this area throughout most of the year. Maamigili Beru is the long, open ocean facing reef which slopes steadily downwards from 5 metres to a sandy bottom at 30 metres. The top of the reef features large hard coral formations which are surrounded by hundreds of colourful, small reef fish as well as providing homes for a variety of moray eels, shrimps and hunting grounds for lionfish. As well as whale sharks, mobula rays and turtles are also common sightings here. Along the outer edges of the reef, you will find lots of schooling fish and occasionally, eagle rays and reef sharks.

Vaavu Atoll

Fotteyo Kandu

Many scuba divers consider Fotteyo Kandu to be the best dive site in the Maldives. The mouth of the channel is exposed to the open ocean and, during northeast monsoon when the currents are incoming, a good variety of pelagic hunters gather at the entrance to the channel. Species commonly spotted here include grey reef sharks patrolling the channel mouth, jacks and tuna in the deeper water, schools of midnight snappers and red snappers in huge groups. The wall features caves, overhangs and swim-throughs at different depths which are filled with colourful soft corals and massive black coral bushes.

Miyaru Kandu

In Dhivehi, Miyaru means shark, indicating what to expect at this channel dive location, specifically grey and white-tip reef sharks in large numbers in the middle of the channel around the entrance. The channel opening slopes from 30-35 metres before dropping off into the deep, open ocean on the eastern side of the atoll; leading into the atoll, the channel floor is approximately 25 metres deep and mostly sand, with a small coral garden towards the end. Depending on which way the current is flowing, we hook in on one of the corners to watch the action before continuing the dive as a drift either into the channel, or out and along the outside reef.

Alimathaa

On the southern side of Miyaru Kandu is the resort island of Alimathaa. Here we usually do a sunset dive on the resort's house reef, close to their jetty, which is well known for the large number of resident nurse sharks. There is no need to go searching for them, simply hook in, wait (not very long) and watch in awe as they circle around and above the reef and the divers. As if that wasn't exciting enough, you can also expect some eagle rays to put in an appearance just to mix things up a bit.

Golden Wall

The dive site earned its name from the abundance of yellow and orange soft corals that cover the 40-metre deep, vertical wall inside of the channel. If the current isn't too strong, you can spend time exploring the caves and overhangs along the wall where you are likely to find moray eels, small reef fish and nudibranchs. At the corner of the channel mouth, there are usually large groups of fish and, as with most channel dives in the Maldives, you can also expect to see sharks and other pelagics patrolling the blue of the outside reef and channel entrance.

Rakeedhoo Corner

Rakeedhoo Kandu is located on the southernmost tip of Vaavu Atoll where we usually dive on and around the western corner of the channel. Starting at 5 metres, the reef extends outwards in steps to around 30 metres then drops off almost vertically on the outside reef to the 50+ metre deep ocean floor. We go with the direction of the current along the edge of the channel and around the corner where there are lots of interesting features and marine life. There are lots of overhangs and caves to explore with colourful corals and anemones providing shelter for many different types of critters and plenty of fish activity too with groups of blue-fin trevally, fusiliers and snappers hanging around the corner area, as well as turtles, sharks and rays.

Should you have any questions or concerns regarding the dive sites or whether this itinerary is suitable for your experience level, please contact our reservations team dive@masterliveaboards.com who will be pleased to assist and advise you.