

# Maldives, Northern Atolls

## 10 nights Itinerary

- **Embarkation:** Malé International Airport\* at 12:30 or 16:00
- **Disembarkation:** Hanimaadhoo Harbour, Haa Dhaalu Atoll @ 08:00

OR

- **Embarkation:** Hanimaadhoo Harbour, Haa Dhaalu Atoll at 12:30 or 16:30
- **Disembarkation:** Hulhumale Harbour, Malé @ 08:00

Please check your booking details carefully for embarkation and disembarkation locations for your departure dates.

### Flights & Transfers

- **Domestic Airport:** Haa Dhaalu - Hanimaadhoo International Airport (HAQ)

Domestic flights are not included in the liveboard price although we are happy to arrange these for you.

Transfer from the embarkation location airport to Blue Voyager and from the liveboard to the disembarkation location airport is by dhoni.

***We can not arrange pick-up and transfers from hotels.*** Guests staying in a hotel or resort before their liveboard need to arrange transport to be at the embarkation airport in time for transfer to Blue Voyager at the time specified in your departure pack.

### \*Malé Embarkation

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**

### Hanimaadhoo Embarkation

Our crew will meet you at Haimaadhoo Airport at one of the times noted below for transfer by dhoni to Blue Voyager.

- We have two times for pick-ups from Hanimaadhoo Airport: **12:30 and 16:30 only.**
- There is a coffee shop and luggage storage at Hanimaadhoo Airport which guests can use if they have time to fill between their flight arrival and transfer

## Diving Information

Northern Atolls itineraries are *not suitable for entry-level divers*, or those who are not comfortable or used to diving in currents. Many of the dive sites that may be included on this itinerary are susceptible to **very strong and often unpredictable currents**, which can be challenging even for experienced divers.

All guests are responsible for their own dive profiles and, due to the nature of the dives, must be capable of diving as part of an independent buddy team without dive guide supervision or intervention.

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

### Minimum MANDATORY dive certification and experience:

The following are requirements for all divers wishing to participate in this itinerary:

- PADI **Advanced Open Water** certification, or equivalent
- Minimum of **50 logged dives**.
- **Previous experience diving in currents**
- **Comfortable with drift dives, negative entries and deploying an SMB underwater.**
- **Nitrox certification\*** is highly advantageous and **strongly recommended**.

\*We offer SSI Nitrox certification onboard for those not already certified.

*Guests who do not fulfil the required minimum certification and number of dives, or who the crew feel have insufficient experience or fitness for the diving conditions, may be denied participation in some or all dives.*

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 prone to feeling cold may be more comfortable in a 5mm wetsuit and are advised to bring additional thermal layers such as a vest, hood or skinsuit to wear under their wetsuit

## Itinerary Details

Participation in this liveboard itinerary is subject to acceptance of our [Terms & Conditions](#)

The Northern Atolls itineraries take you to a selection of dive sites around the northern regions of the Maldives which includes North Malé, Baa, Raa, Shaviyani, Haa Dhaalu and Haa Alifu. There is so much to explore in this exciting diving adventure, with expected sightings of sharks, eagle rays, tuna, Napoleon wrasse and much more.

### Fees & Taxes:

Maldives Government Green Tax is mandatory and must be paid in advance as part of your liveboard 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. All USD banknotes MUST be in PRISTINE CONDITION otherwise they can not be accepted.

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:** Up to 25

While we endeavour to ensure the number of 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 therefore 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 the embarkation airport - transfer by dhoni to Blue Voyager.** Embarkation is followed by introductions, boat and safety briefings and dinner. There is no diving on embarkation day.

**Days 2-9:** We typically offer a maximum of 3 dives on full diving days, scheduled as follows unless travelling distances or other circumstances dictate otherwise:

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

\*If it is possible to visit Hanifaru Bay, there will only be 2 dives offered on that day.

If it is possible to offer a sunset or night dive, the scheduling of the preceding dives will be slightly amended. However, only one **sunset or night dive** will usually be offered and the possibility of either is **not guaranteed**.

**Day 10:** For your last day of diving we usually schedule two morning dives\* before the boat heads back to port after lunch.

\*Guests are reminded to check their flight departure time to ensure they will have a minimum of 24 hours between their final dive and flying.

**Day 11:** After an early breakfast on board, disembarkation and transfer to the airport is at 08:00.

Please be aware that **this itinerary will involve diving in currents**, some of which can be very strong. Following is an overview of the areas we usually visit on Northern Atolls itineraries and a sample of the dive sites that might be included, depending on conditions.

While we wish to show you the best diving possible, various factors determine which sites we visit on each trip. Weather, tides, currents and marine life activity are just some of the considerations that determine which locations are selected for diving. The safety and comfort of all on board are paramount and we always do our best to offer diving at alternative sites should we be unable to visit any of those 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 has 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, seafan-filled caves and sandy patches which come to life with garden eels popping out of their burrows to feed on water-bourne 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 thila's 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 at a depth of 26 metres. 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)

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.

***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, which draws the mantas in to feed and mate. When conditions are just right, there can be up to 200 manta rays feeding off the reefs in Hanifaru Bay.

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.** All USD banknotes MUST be in BRAND NEW, UNBLEMISHED CONDITION.

## 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 reef-top at 10-12 metres deep 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.

## Shaviyani, Haa Daahlu & Haa Alifu Atolls

These three atolls are some of the oldest of the Maldives archipelago and form a single chain of widely spaced islands surrounded by deep, clear blue water. Thilas and walls teeming with fishlife, undercut ledges with excellent corals and beautiful white sand floors add to the appeal of diving in these northernmost atolls of the Maldives.

The majority of diving is on thilas, inside the atolls.

**Shaviyani Atoll (North Miladhunmadulu)** - also known as Miladhunmadulu Uthuruburi, Shaviyani Atoll is the northern section of Miladhunmadulu Atoll which extends south into Noonu Atoll (South Miladhunmadulu). Shaviyani consists of 51 islands and is renowned for its natural beauty, clear turquoise waters and thriving marine life.

**Haa Dhaalu Atoll (South Thiladhunmathi)** - Directly above Shaviyani, Haa Dhaalu is the southern section of Thiladhunmathi Atoll and incorporates the isolated Maamakunudhoo Atoll within its boundaries. Haa Dhaalu is a beautiful and unique part of the Maldives with stunning coral reefs and diverse marine life.

**Haa Alifu Atoll (North Thiladhunmathi)** - also known as Thiladhunmathi Uthuruburi, Haa Alifu Atoll takes you as far north as you can get while remaining within Maldivian waters as it includes Ihavandhippolhu Atoll, the most northern natural atoll in the island nation.

**Notable dive sites that we might visit, depending on conditions, include:**

- Shaviyani - Maroshi Thila: an action-packed dive with a variety of sharks, abundant fish life and excellent corals.
- Shaviyani - Lola Thila: an amazing underwater hill with a good chance of sharks with a good current.
- Shaviyani - Orange Thila: Another underwater hill with some undercuts where guitar sharks can often be found hiding or outside in the sandy area. Barracuda and schools of bannerfish.
- Haa Dhaalu - Heaven and Hell: A long narrow thila, split into three separate pinnacles, featuring overhangs full of soft corals. Possible encounters include reef sharks and stingrays as well as smaller marine life; sometimes nurse sharks can be spotted sleeping at the bottom.
- Haa Dhaalu - Kulhudhufushi Thila: A large, deep underwater hill with coral blocks, table corals and a cleaning station which is periodically visited by mantas.
- Haa Alifu - Baarah Thila: Located inside a channel, this thila is connected to the channel wall. Overhangs, nicely grown with soft corals and lots of small marine life to be found.
- Haa Alifu - Island Hideaway: mantas (most of the time)

Should you have any questions or concerns about the dive sites and conditions, or whether this itinerary is suitable for your experience level, please contact our reservations team [dive@masterliveboards.com](mailto:dive@masterliveboards.com)