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Maldives, tourism

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The Republic of Maldives, comprised of 1,192 coralline islands formed as 26 atolls, is located south of the Indian subcontinent (Figure 1). The islands are dispersed on an exclusive economic zone of 859,000 km² (331,661.75 mi²). The land area is 298 km² (115.06 mi²), which on average is less than three meters above sea level. Its population of 331,000 reside on 194 islands (DNP 2013).

Tourism was introduced in 1972. Today, 105 islands operate as enclave resorts, with an additional 74 being developed (MTAC 2013). The resorts are self-contained with their own ► power generators, water desalination plants, sewage treatment system, and transport facilities. Two international airports receive arrivals, who are then transferred via domestic seaplanes or speedboats to the resorts. Tourism in the Maldives embodies classic pleasure periphery dynamics and has steadily grown over the past

40 years (Table 1), replacing the traditional fishing economy.

Since the inception of tourism, Europeans represent the largest market segment (52 %), followed by Asia-Pacific (23 %), and the ► Americas (16 %) in 2012. The average duration of stay is 6.7 days. Due to limited data, details about ► domestic tourism are unavailable.

Maldivian tourism is purported to be an example of successful sustainable development, an aspect contested by researchers (Shakeela et al. 2011). Regulations require operators to employ 50 % locals; however, due to a lack of tourism education and suitable skills, meeting this requirement has been a challenge. The industry has also created an “enclave paradox”: tourism is unsustainable from the employees’ perspective but sustainable from the broader residents’ perspective (Shakeela and Weaver 2012). Climate change is a key threat to both tourism and local communities (Shakeela and Becken 2014). These opportunities and challenges are of relevance to researchers and practitioners. Future research areas include changes in core market segments and product mix and alternative forms of tourism for ► development, ► sustainability, climate change risks, and local employment.



Maldives, tourism, Figure 1 Map of the Maldives

Maldives, tourism, Table 1 Maldives tourism dependence

Year	1972	1982	1992	2002	2012
No. of resorts	2	44	65	87	105
Resort bed capacity	280	3,984	8,487	16,400	22,889
International ► tourist arrivals	1,097	74,411	235,852	484,680	958,027
Tourism contribution to GDP (%)	n/a	32.6	35.0	30.9	27.7
% share of tourism revenue	n/a	20.3	25.9	34.2	38.2
Tourism receipts (US\$ million)	n/a	19.8	138.0	337.1	1,548.9
Direct employment	n/a	n/a	7,880	15,126	36,768

(Source: MTAC 2013)

See also ► [Climate change](#), ► [enclave tourism](#),
► [Island tourism](#), ► [sustainable tourism](#).

References

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