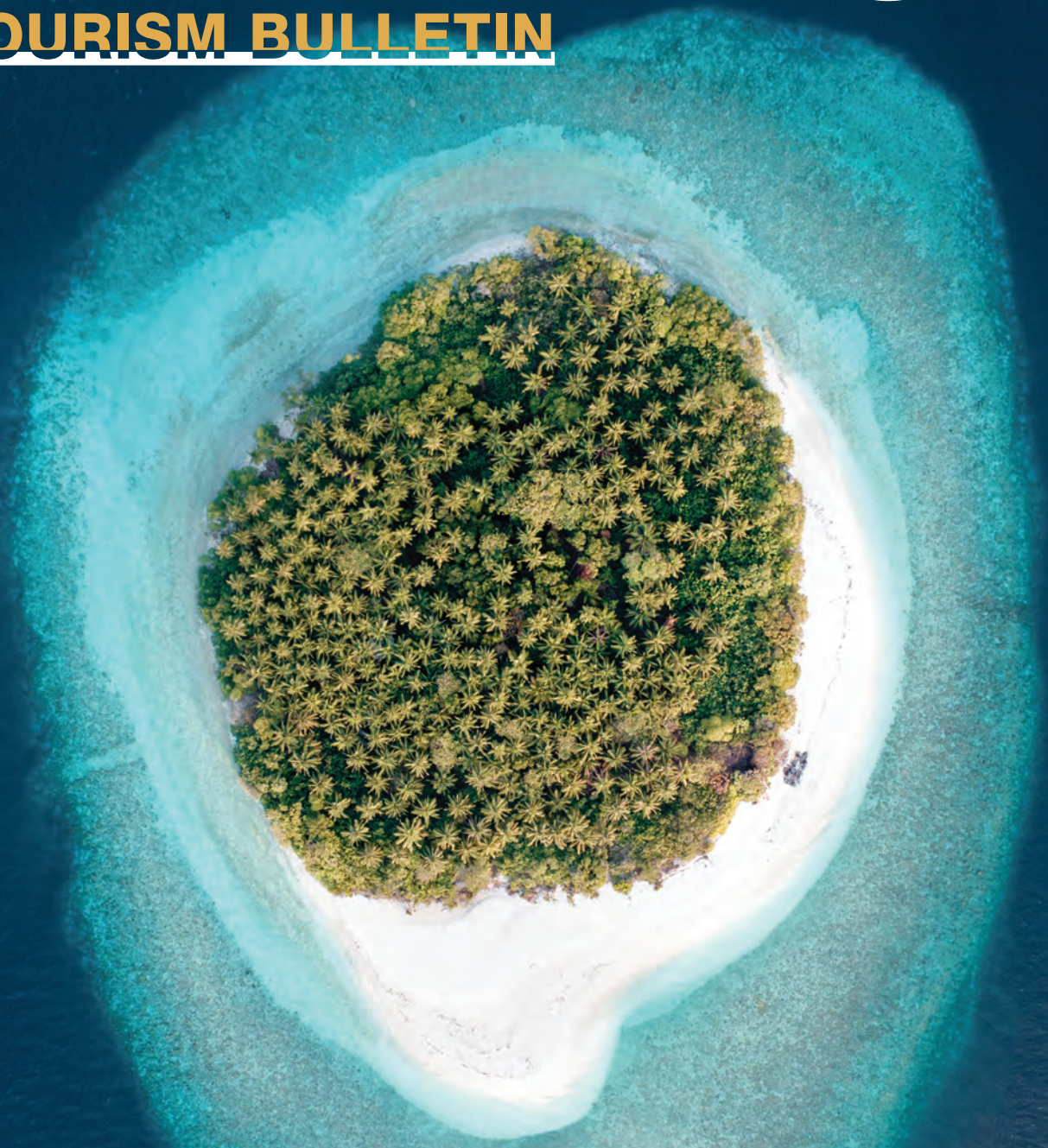


MALDIVES

TOURISM BULLETIN

Volume:01
January 2021



HIGHLIGHTS

News highlights and events

CONVERSATIONS

Interview with different personalities

WOMEN IN TOURISM

Stories of women personalities



MINISTRY OF TOURISM
REPUBLIC OF MALDIVES



“When the going gets tough,
the tough get going”



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FOREWORD

President of the Republic of Maldives

IBRAHIM MOHAMED SOLIH

Tourism has been the mainstay of the Maldives' economy for several decades now. The industry has long thrived, not only on the strength of our natural assets - our pristine oceans, beautiful beaches and vibrant marine wildlife – but also the care and professionalism which has developed the sector. Together, these strengths have made the Maldives a standard-bearer for the industry, and one of the world's most popular destinations.

This year has been rife with difficulties. A pandemic induced combination of global restrictions on air-travel, the closing of the Maldives' borders, and the urgent and exclusive priority we had to give to our health sector saw the number of tourist-arrivals decrease to an all-time low. Thankfully, we have now begun to put this phase behind us. The reopening of our borders in July saw that the Maldives' tourism brand remains as strong as ever and that the eagerness of tourists to visit has not diminished.

Each subsequent month has seen arrival numbers grow, especially as tourists are re-assured by the steps we have taken, under guidelines developed by national health authorities and the Ministry of Tourism, to ensure that the Maldives is a safe-destination.

I am confident that in 2021 we will continue to see the industry strengthen as the Maldives and the world recovers. I am proud to launch this magazine which showcases the enduring strengths of the Maldives brand and outlines how we intend to take the industry forward in the years to come.





STATEMENT

Minister of Tourism

DR. ABDULLA MAUSOOM

Greetings from the Ministry of Tourism.

We just passed the most turbulent year for the Maldives' tourism industry since its inception in 1972. Even though the Year 2020 is the toughest year for tourism, we are welcoming this new year with renewed optimism. Optimism that is inspired by the tremendous determination, efforts and dedication of the tourism industry partners. Vigor reinforced by the notion that "when the going gets tough the tough get going".

The courageous decision by His Excellency President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih to open the borders of Maldives and the hard work and contributions of travel and tourism industry partners, employees, related agencies and authorities, health professionals, national uniformed staff, local councils, associations, volunteers and the lovely community has enabled us to welcome the New Year 2021 with a sense of achievement. The Maldives adopted a multisectoral unified approach to deal with the crisis and move on with the travel and tourism industry. The whole of government, the whole of travel and tourism industry and the whole of community approach has worked well.

The amazing recovery of Maldives tourism can also be attributed to the healthy foreign relations and the guidance and support from the international community. Heartfelt appreciation to all the tourists who trusted and helped Maldives become the "World's Leading Destination 2020" by World Travel Awards.

The tourism indicators surpassed the expectations and forecasts of even the optimists. We are indeed witnessing a boom to the tourism industry. The Maldives has managed to continue its tourism industry with protocols and guidelines to provide an environment for maximum safety possible to tourists, employees and the community with minimum inconvenience. We are very positive that this year will also be very favorable for tourism and related investments in the Maldives. The 10th amendment to Maldives Tourism Act opens many golden opportunities for new investments. Last night we started the count down for the "Golden2022" the Golden Jubilee of Maldives tourism, that will be celebrated throughout the Year 2022.

Thank you all for your contributions to Maldives tourism recovery.

Happy New Year 2021.

For travelers and tourists from across the world, Maldives is often synonymized with the phrase Paradise on Earth-- a claim strongly evident from the sunny weather, vibrant seas and sandy beaches strewn among the string of thousands of isles adorning the Indian Ocean. This, along with the warm hospitality and truly authentic cultural experience of an island nation always promises that there's something new for one to experience here in the Maldives.

As such, the popularity of the island nation continues to grow across the globe each year. This is evident from the fact that even while enduring a global pandemic, we were able to achieve our arrival targets. It was with great joy that on 17 December, merely 4 months since our borders re-opened following a nationwide lockdown, we welcomed the 500,000th tourist visitor of 2020 to the Maldives.

Ms Kirstin Madeline from Germany who travelled

“It was Indescribable” Ms. Kirstin, the 500,000th Tourist of 2020

Understandably, she was initially unable to describe her feelings when she first knew she was the 500,000th tourist. She quotes “It was indescribable. I was so excited and very happy, but at the same time I couldn't believe my luck! It was such a wonderful experience. I am very grateful for this experience.”

We met with her later, and she shared some memorable tidbits of her trip filled with many different experiences. She recalled that seeing a baby shark on the very first day here



here on Emirates was the lucky visitor, who upon arrival was given a grand welcoming event at VIA, complete with a special escort by boduberu quartets. Several gifts were awarded to her as well, including a holiday voucher for a 7 night stay at CocoBodu Hithi, which included a complementary full-boarded accommodation in an island villa at the island resort.

Before she left the airport towards Robinson Club Noonu for her vacation, we had a chat with her, as she shared her thoughts. Ms. Madeline revealed that she was looking for destination that met certain preferences: that it should be warm, and that it needed to have clear rules to ensure a safe but enjoyable experience amidst the pandemic. As it turned out, Maldives met both her conditions, which she and her partner were able to obtain online before travelling to the Maldives.

was the most exciting memory. Throughout the whole trip, she mentioned having a great time with people she met here, and enjoying the snorkeling and relaxation opportunities. She also remarked that having captured the wonderful experiences on picture and memory, she could talk about them for a long time. She advises everyone to travel to the Maldives and experience it themselves, strongly advocating the adage of Maldives and its synonymous paradise experience.

“We have had many different experiences here. The most exciting one was when we saw a baby shark on our first day, it's just beautiful. the landscape, the beaches, the hotel ... just a dream. I feel like I am in paradise and I just want to say thank you. I am very grateful to be able to have this great experience and to have met all the great people and to receive such a nice welcome and great gifts, it still feels like a dream”

“It is a paradise for Divers”

Ms. Jasmine, the **100,000th** Tourist since Border Reopened



“I already texted my family and friends and shared a lot of pictures, saying how amazing it is here!”

This year wrought devastation to the tourism sector of the Maldives, as the island nation’s borders had to be closed off due to the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic far and wide across the world.

Despite this colossal setback, diligently well designed counter-strategies were implemented by the HPA along with other key supporting stakeholders. As a result, Maldives was able to safely reopen its borders. The industry resumed commercial activity, and in the process regained momentum throughout the year. This was evident on 12 December 2020, as Maldives welcomed the 100,000th inbound tourist arrival since the reopening of the borders. The arrival was confirmed and acknowledged by the Ministry of Tourism, Maldives Immigration, Maldives Marketing and Public Relations Corporation and Maldives Airports Company Limited.

The lucky visitor was none other than Jasmine from Switzerland, who arrived via Emirates Airlines. Following a special event for her upon arrival in commemoration of the milestone, the couple left for their accommodations at the island resort of Embudu Village. As part of the commemoration, she received an all-inclusive trip experience courtesy of the Hard Rock Hotels, along with several free accommodation upgrades by the island resort, including a water bungalow.

We had the opportunity to have a quick chat with her before she left Maldives. Jasmine and her boyfriend are passionate divers, seeking diving destinations across the globe— a desire challenged for the most part this year by not having been able to travel and enjoy a holiday with diving experiences.

Nevertheless, it appears that her diving desires were well met here in the Maldives. She quotes, “I already texted my family and friends and shared a lot of pictures, saying how amazing it is here!, it is a paradise for divers, we saw so many sharks and mantas! The sea and the beaches are very beautiful and the people are so kind. We had an amazing time and very grateful for all the benefits”.

We are glad to know that our milestone visitor enjoyed her stay here and hope to see her soon again at the sunny side of life.



GOLDEN JUBILEE YEAR 2022 Countdown Campaign Begins

Ministry of Tourism began a countdown campaign towards the celebrations of the year 2022; the year of the Golden Jubilee of the Tourism Industry of Maldives.

The campaign consisting of special video clips with special messages from tourism industry pioneers, partners, employees and tourists from 1st January to 31st December 2021 will be shared via social media platforms of this Ministry, throughout year 2021.

“2022 The Golden Year of Tourism” countdown was launched by one of the first tourists visit to the Maldives and a pioneer of tourism development in Maldives, Mr. George Corbin.

Ministry of Tourism in partnership with all tourism stakeholders will be planning activities and events to colorfully celebrate The “Golden Jubilee of Tourism”.

MALDIVES BORDER MILES

The very first of its kind in the world

Maldives Immigration, together with the Ministry of Tourism, Maldives Marketing and Public Relations Corporation and Maldives Airports Company launched the “Maldives Border Miles” program, the very first of its kind in the world on 27th September 2020.

Maldives Border Miles is a three-tier, nation-wide loyalty program for tourists who will earn points based on the duration of stay, visits to celebrate their special occasions, visits on local occasions, frequency of visits, and other aspects. Once a tourist enrolls as a member of this program, they will begin earning points. The program will be officially implemented on 1st January 2021.

Members of Maldives Border Miles program will get benefits based on their tier status. They shall earn a certain amount of points to reach each tier, 500 points for Aida (Bronze Tier), 2,000 points for Antara (Silver Tier) and 4,000 points for Abaarana (Gold Tier), which will be defined by a set variety of rewards, services or benefits, increasing in value as members progress. Information on members online account at the website, www.bordermiles.mv, will provide down easy-to-understand breakdown benefits of each tier.

This program also intends to promote the rich culture of Maldivians, making cultural tourism a new aspect in the industry. Additionally, with the nation-wide benefits to the members, this program will be an affiliation to the repeated travelers to explore the uniqueness of their favorite destination further.

“We developed Imuga, to provide immigration services online during the pandemic. Apart from public services through the online portal, we obliged all travelers to submit a Traveler Health Declaration (THD) via this platform, when the border was reopened on 15th July 2020.

*As the THD is a requirement from all inbound and outbound passengers, the portal was visited by millions and I thought we could use the platform to contribute the tourism sector of Maldives, because the whole government should put more effort to boost the economy of Maldives during such an unprecedented time.” -
Controller General of Maldives Immigration*



Maldives Border Miles



MALDIVES MARINE EXPO 2020

By: National Boating Association of Maldives

Maldives Marine Expo is the longest running maritime event for the marine industry held in the Maldives, it has become the prime platform for the marine industry to engage, network and exchange ideas, with each year making constant progress the event has gained regional recognition and interest.



Maldives Marine Expo Virtual Edition is the first of its kind truly virtual exhibition held in the Maldives, the exhibition is the longest maritime event for the marine industry held in the Maldives. This year's edition came at unprecedented times and was held from 20 - 22 December 2020. Facing these challenges, the event brought hope to the

marine community to network and bond together to overcome these challenges together.

Maldives Marine Expo, Virtual Edition highlights key features for exhibitors and visitors alike, such as the;

Auditorium where live webinar discussions by industry key players from both government and private sector would be held, as well as seminar sessions by industry stakeholders. The details for the live webinars and seminars would be disclosed via social media channels of Maldives Marine Expo. Visually representing a lagoon cinema giving a unique experience.

Network Zone is a place where all participants can view all other online at the same time and engage in conversation, it a mass communication chat area for quick responses. The visual representation of the network zone would be as an open-air lounge area very commonly found in the Maldives.

Expo Hall is where visitors can engage with the exhibitors and inquire about their products or services, Visitors can view product catalogues, company profiles, technical specifications, promotional videos, etc. from the exhibitor stall. Visitors can also conduct live video chats with the exhibitors and engage thoroughly about their products or services.

Speaking at the event, NBAM President Mr. Afrah said "Even with the unprecedented impact of Covid-19 from beginning of this year, the months of lock down which our country has gone through and the massive toll it has taken on our economy, still we have come together as an industry to overcome the challenges. The huge reception we have received from our partners for MME is evidence of the resilience of the Maldives tourism industry and especially the marine sector".

Maldives Marine Expo is the official event of the National Boating Association of Maldives (NBAM), the association promotes the betterment of the Liveaboard and marine industry and is at the forefront in advocating for the stakeholders of the marine sector. The organizer of Maldives Marine Expo Virtual Edition is MEDIUM Pvt Ltd, the company has cumulative experience spanning 45+years, and provides full-suite event management, creative solutions.



THE ROAD TO RECOVERY

By: Dr. Naushad Mohamed

COVID-19 has hampered the growth of global tourism severely. Economies such as the Maldives that depend heavily on tourism for national income has been most affected due to the pandemic . This article highlights the impact of COVID-19 and the road to recovery for international tourist arrivals.

Global tourism was booming before COVID-19 took the world by surprise. The vibrant global tourism industry was performing well in 2019 with a 4% growth in 2019 reaching a whopping 1.5 billion in international tourist arrivals . The ambiguity of Brexit affected Europe slightly while Middle East (+8%) and Asia Pacific (+5%) was taking the lead. Unfortunately, with the wake of COVID-19 towards the end of the year, global tourism industry has been hit hard. According to the latest reports in December 2020, international tourism for the year 2020 is expected to decline over 70%, with possible loss of international tourism receipts equivalent to USD 1.1 trillion, taking global tourism a U-turn to where we were 30 years back . The report highlights the main reason being inability to contain coupled with imposed travel restrictions globally. More recent reports predict the figure to be 80% for the year 2020 . These are alarming figures as the global financial crisis caused only 8 per cent decline in arrivals and SARS epidemic in 2003 caused a 17% decline .

Maldives have been performing well compared to most tourist destinations, While Asia Pacific has been hit hard with 82% decline , Maldives have managed to successfully restart tourism with signs of positive traveler confidence. Several countries have opted to capitalize on domestic tourism for economic recovery given that domestic tourism is six times larger than international tourism. Popular tourist destinations such as China and the Philippines have taken this opportunity to strengthen domestic tourism to stimulate economic activities . Unlike, Maldives not all destinations depend on international tourists for tourism revenue.

Despite lack of experience in managing health outbreak, the Maldives have thus far seems to be making the right decisions guided by local health professionals. Interestingly, according to The Guardian, countries that experienced SARS in year 2002 and 2003 has been most successful in 'containing the disease' . Experience of the SARS epidemic has helped governments to be more prepared for disease outbreak. Likewise, the residents of such countries would most likely comply with movement restrictions to restrain the spread of the disease or virus. With Maldives, having no experience of SARS or a similar disease outbreak in recent history, the country has comparatively managed the pandemic well by giving health professionals the lead. Close observation of countries which previously experienced SARS such as China, Singapore and Canada have helped policy makers make the right decisions in addition to following protocols set forth by WHO and CDC.

Maldives have been swift in enforcing measures of movement restrictions based on patterns of virus spread in capital Male' and the rest of the country. Thus far, Maldives have been fortunate enough that the number of positive cases have been marginal and within the control from its onset. Furthermore, the number of tourists that have tested negative after arrival to Maldives have been insignificant compared to national or international figures. More importantly, the government has been able to build trust in its transparency with COVID-19 test results being reported in a timely manner. Health Protection Agency (HPA) have been efficient in communicating critical risk factors and important information to the general community. Most notably HPA has been proactive in addressing misinformation through HPA along with Ministry of Tourism in websites, social media, press briefings and call centers.

Generally, countries like the Maldives that depend heavily on tourism for national income are more likely to ease travel restrictions. When Maldives opened its borders in July, about 87 other destinations have eased travel restrictions with only few completely removing all restrictions. Amongst these destinations that eased travel restrictions, interestingly 20 of these were Small Island Developing States (SIDS) similar to Maldives that depend heavily on tourist for national income and providing local employment.

The challenge in this pandemic lies in tourism being a social experience necessitating human interaction. Fortunately, the tourism model in the Maldives is positioned as a relaxing destination giving travelers privacy and social distancing in its beach villas and water bungalows. The current measures for the requirement of a negative PCR seems to be helping Maldives re-start tourism as a safe destination for both the tourists and industry employees. In fact, the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends testing one to three days before flight coupled with wearing masks and social distancing as one of the safest ways for travelers.

With COVID-19 vaccination in early 2021, traveler confidence is expected to improve yet recovery is expected to be gradual. To that end, travel restrictions imposed in major source markets of Maldives remains the main barrier for tourism recovery. International Monetary Fund projects recovery of tourism may extend to 2023 to each the pre-COVID levels in 2019.



MALDIVES TOURISM IS REBOUNDED



The year 2019 had been a phenomenal year for Maldives Tourism with achieved targets and new milestones. For the first time Maldives welcomed 1.5 million tourists and ended the year with over 1.7 million arrivals. The incoming flow of tourists in terms of regional results had been impressive. Europe remained as the leading region with 49% shares and a growth of +15% over the previous year, followed by Asia and the Pacific with 41% shares and +14% increase. The combined market share of Americas and Middle East stood at near 9%. While Americas recorded the highest growth rate for the year with over 23%, Middle East increased by 15%. African region recorded the second highest growth of +22%, though its share was a negligible 1.1%. By individual markets China (17%), India (10%), Italy (8%), Germany (8%) and U.K (7%) were the top five markets. The Chinese market held onto its position at the top and managed to end the year with an increase of +0.3%, despite its performance dropping significantly low during the latter half of 2019. While the Indian market nearly tripled its incoming flow into Maldives, the Italian market increased by 30%. Germany and U.K recorded +12% and +10% growths respectively.

With these results from 2019, Maldives welcomed the year 2020 with high expectations. The target was to achieve 2 million tourists for the first time in its 48-year history and looked promising as January ended with optimistic results. Tourist arrivals saw an increase of over 14% with a total of 173,347 tourists. By early February, the new Corona Virus became a global outbreak and started taking its toll on international travel, with travel restrictions and closed borders across the globe, forcing airlines to stop their operations. The World Health Organization declared COVID-19 outbreak a global health pandemic, bringing international travel to a near halt. Tourist Arrivals to the Maldives plunged by 11% during the month. On 27th March 2020, with first local case of community spread confirmed from the capital city, Maldives closed its borders for international tourists, for the first time in its tourism history, as a precautionary measure against COVID-19 spread. Borders remained closed for over 3 months. By the time borders closed, a total of 382,760 tourists had visited the Maldives.

After taking necessary preventive measures with increased safety protocols and a COVID-19 management guideline set in place, on 15th July 2020, the Maldives reopened its borders to tourists and welcomed 80 tourists. The month ended with 1,701 tourists visiting the Maldives. Month by month, incoming flow of tourists gradually increased and the target for the year was revised to 500,000. On 12th December 2020, Maldives surpassed a new milestone receiving 100,000 tourists since reopening of borders. A week later, on 17th December the new target of 500K tourists for the year was reached, signaling signs of recovery on the horizon. New markets emerged after the reopening of border. U.A.E, U.S.A and Russia started out as star performers and Russia took the lead. Since re-opening, as of 23rd December 2020, the top five

markets to the Maldives are Russia (19%), India (17%), U.K (12%), U.S.A (5%) and Germany (4.8%).











The month of November was a record month with actual arrival numbers exceeding the forecasts. Some markets bounced back with full recovery, posting positive growths. Russian market saw an increase of +5% in November 2020 compared with November 2019. Other markets that made full recovery in November 2020 were, Ukraine which posted an increase of +0.9%, Kazakhstan with +24%, Brazil with +2.9% and Egypt with nearly +41%. The recovery trend continues through December 2020. As of 23rd December 2020, the Middle East region as a whole, recorded a positive growth of +4.3% compared with the same period of December 2019. Furthermore, nine markets within the European region also have recorded positive results in December 2020. These include, Kazakhstan (+326%), Russia (+90%), Lithuania (+89.1%), Ireland (+40.4%), Ukraine (+35.9%), Latvia (+31.0%), U.K (+29.9%), Belarus (+17.6%), and Bulgaria (+8.9%). The Maldives is on fast a recovery trend. With increased demand for new flight slots at Velana International Airport, air traffic movements are also on the rise and it is expected that tourist arrivals will exceed 550,000 by end December 2020.

These positive results are expected to continue throughout 2021, with an anticipated 1 million tourist arrivals for the year. Though uncertainty remains, the year 2021 looks promising and hopeful as countries are on the process of opening their borders with the rollout of the vaccine and easing up on travel restrictions. The Maldives tourism has shown strong resilience to global shocks in the past and the prospects for faster recovery from this crisis is high, as international travel and tourism takes a new turn adjusting through the new normal pathway in 2021 and beyond.

CRUNCHING NUMBERS

TOTAL ARRIVALS 2020	Arrivals	Growth (%)	Daily Average	Duration of Stay (days)
Till border closure (Jan-Mar)	382,760	-20.8	4,206	7.6
Border Closed Period (27 March - 14th July)	87	-	22	46.2
After opening border (15th July - 23rd Dec)	142,210	-	1,006	9.2
July (15th - 31st)	1,701	-98.7	113	14.1
August	7,628	-94.5	246	9.3
September	9,538	-92.9	318	9.5
October	21,515	-84.8	694	9.6
November	35,759	-74.1	1,192	8.9
December (01st - 30th)	93,823	-43.8	3,127	9.1
Total 2020 (01st Jan - 30th Dec)	552,811	-67.5	2,094	7.8

TOP 10 MARKETS 2020 (as of 30th December)

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1.  Russia (10%) | 6.  Germany (7.0%) |
| 2.  Italy (9.9%) | 7.  France (5.2%) |
| 3.  India (9.6%) | 8.  U.S.A (3.7%) |
| 4.  U.K (8.3%) | 9.  Switzerland (2.2%) |
| 5.  China (7.4%) | 10.  Japan (1.8%) |

ARRIVALS BY REGION (as of 30 th December)	Arrivals	Growth (%)	Share (%)
Europe	346,366	-58.3	62.7
Asia & the Pacific	141,716	-79.9	25.6
Americas	31,974	-62.2	5.8
Middle East	26,246	-56.2	4.7
Africa	6,427	-65.5	1.2

CRUNCHING NUMBERS

MARKET RECOVERY DECEMBER 2020	MARKETS / REGIONS	Arrivals 2019	Arrivals 2020	Growth (%)
	Kazakhstan	880	2,820	220.5
Ukraine	1,476	2,930	98.5	
Iran	75	134	78.7	
Russia	7,479	14,690	73.3	
Lithuania	242	382	57.9	
Slovakia	764	1,159	51.7	
Pakistan	502	713	42.0	
Romania	1,447	1,968	36.0	
Belarus	295	396	34.2	
Bulgaria	956	1,269	32.7	
Ireland	368	447	21.5	
United Kingdom	11,841	14,236	20.2	
Latvia	168	199	18.5	
Czech Republic	1,448	1,647	13.7	
Central / Eastern Europe	20,637	29,892	44.8	

TOURIST ACCOMMODATION FACILITIES (as of 30 th December)	Facility Type	Nos.	Beds
	Resorts / Marinas	141	32,636
Hotels	11	1,458	
Guesthouses	130	2,504	
Safari Vessels	254	4,982	
Total	536	41,580	

The Resort Manager of Equator Village

MR. MOHAMED WAHEED

A proud native from the island of Feydhoo in Addu Atoll, Mr Waheed is currently the Resort Manager of Equator Village. He started his career in 1980 as a trainee receptionist at Villingili Beach Resort. With an astonishing 40 years of experience, Mr Waheed has a lot of insights to offer to the industry

You began your career in hospitality four decades ago. What motivated your decision to do so? Do you believe that the hospitality industry is more rewarding and motivating than other business sectors?

I was motivated to head into the hospitality industry out of a desire to improve myself as well as meet and learn from people from different parts and cultures of the world.

I certainly believe that the hospitality line of work is comparatively a highly rewarding one in this regard. We get to introduce our culture and tradition to the rest of the world. We meet different people from all walks of life and hear their stories. And it certainly feels very rewarding when we get good feedback from the tourists.

You joined Kaimoo Resorts & Hotels in 1995, and witnessed the evolution of the company. What would you say are the key ingredients of the continued success of Kaimoo Resorts & Hotels?

The main ingredient is the trust between the chairperson and staff here. He also makes excellent forecasts, and his decisions are firm yet sensible. Another key positive aspect is that there are ample opportunities for staff to develop and improve themselves while working here.

Equator Village had been in operation since 1983. First as Gan Holiday Club, then as Ocean Reef Club, and later named as Equator Village in 1997. So it's clear that the resort has undergone extensive renovations. Tell us more about it.

For starters, the infrastructure has changed very significantly over the years. We have also rebranded and changed the overall theme of the operations to that of a more homey- boutique hotel. We also made sure that there is something that the tourist can take away with them when they return to their homes i.e. tokens to commemorate their visit. Overall, the physical infrastructural changes, along with thematic changes to our operations have paid off, with increased positive feedback on the services we provide.

What are the competitive advantages of Equator Village?

One certain advantage we enjoy is the location itself. We are located in a site of great historical value in the Maldives. Furthermore, the islands here are connected by land, so there is community involvement and support for our work, and tourists get to interact with the locals and explore the culture closely in a truly authentic manner. And while we are identifiable as a boutique hotel, we provide almost all the services and general amenities that a resort would provide— so there is great value for money that is guaranteed when visitors stay with us.

In December 2016, SriLankan Airlines commenced scheduled services to Gan Island with four weekly flights. How has this operation influenced the livelihoods of the residents of Addu City?

The decision certainly got Addu City connected to the world. More tourists started to visit our city as a result of the direct flights. Likewise, locals were also able to travel more directly abroad. The increased commercial activity both directly and indirectly created more jobs for the locals here in the city.

Consistency and coherence is a must in ensuring the highest service standards? Tell us more about your approach.

It is very vital to us that every tourist should leave Maldives with a smile. We always treat them with great care and love that one would extend to their dearest ones. They should feel that this is more or less their home away from home. And so we always go for a more “heart” based tourism, where we provide the services backed by this kind of belief right from the bottom of our hearts.

Should we develop separate marketing campaigns to promote different regions of the Maldives? Please tell us your views.

Yes, it is very important to market each individual island separately because just as much there are some universal similarities across all regions and islands, each island offers different variations of the hospitality products and services. For instance, Addu City offers a different cultural experience that has unique elements. Our nearest neighbor Fuvamulah while sharing some similarities, comes with its own unique settings and offerings as well. So from an advertising point, it is important that tourists know about each atoll or island for its unique factors and offerings.

Any closing remarks?

I'd like to see more international flight operations to Gan, especially flights from Europe.

I also would like to highlight the hospitality of the Adduans here! Our arms are always widely open to gladly welcome our guests from all across the world. Addu is a very beautiful and safe place as a destination with so much to explore.



“Even with an ongoing pandemic Adduans are showing so much unity and courage during these trying times. I’d like to say to the world #VisitAdduNOW”

EXPERIENCE A HOLIDAY, MALDIVIAN STYLE

By: Guesthouse Association of Maldives

If your idea of an exciting adventure in Maldives is to jump into a whole new world full of exploring and new experiences, or let us dare to say, A Maldivian Style Holiday – our local guest houses could be your perfect host!

Let us give you an idea why it could be JUST the spot for your next Maldives escapade.

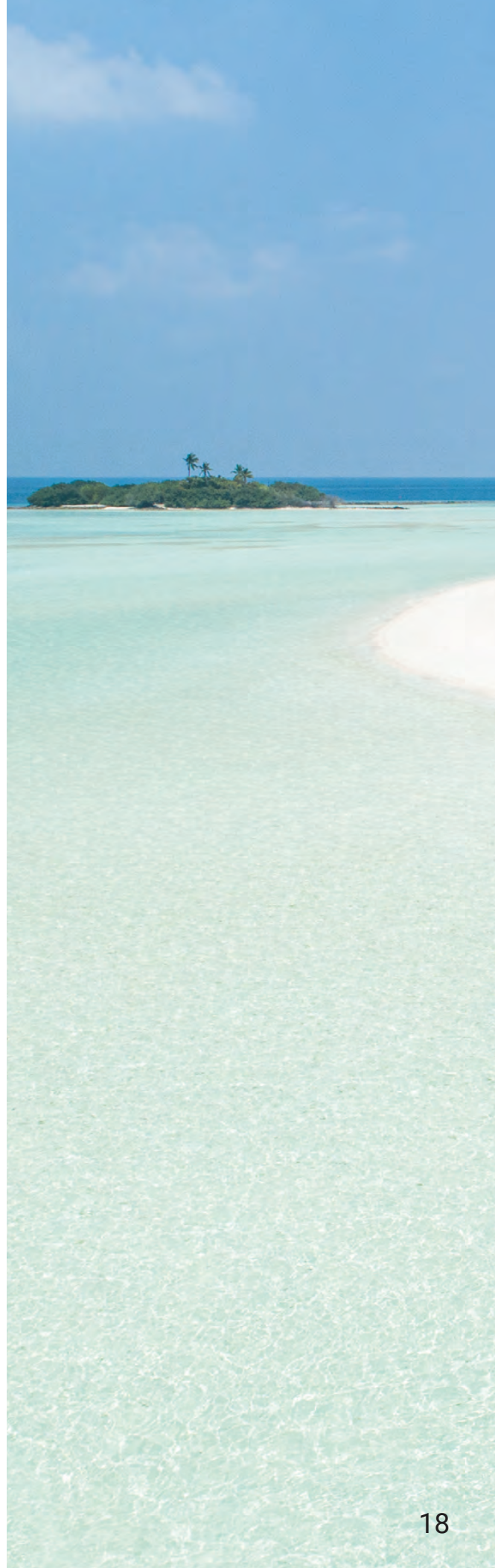
There is no better place than local guesthouses to get a taste of Maldivian lifestyle and our culture. From local cuisines to local household experiences can be obtained there. Living among the friendly locals, interacting and learning about their daily life, you'll most certainly be able to get a full Maldivian experience. Most definitely come across the warmth of local hospitality at its finest

Your plans, their priority

Due to the guesthouses being less crowded, your hosts will be able to be specifically there for you hence able to give you more personalized services throughout your stay. Whether your plans are for a staycation for the day or need help with that beach picnic you always dreamt of? They have got it covered!

A memory to keep

From as small as key chains to note books and T-shirts. Plates, Cups as well as Jewelries made out of shells, different styles and types of souvenirs are available at local islands. A shopping spree to the nearby souvenir shops is a must-do when staying in guesthouses. All these handcrafted goodies are available at a cheaper rate with a wide range of varieties to choose from, near local guesthouses.





Sun, Sand and Sea, CHECK!

Exciting vary of sea sports for your adventures at the sea. Trips to sand bank and snorkeling ventures. Sun bathing at secluded beaches. BBQ nights and Candle-lit Dinner by the sea. Experience these and more with just a little money unlike in resorts. Most of these services come free and definitely within your budget.

Spend Less – Save More

As mentioned earlier, you can experience a wonderful holiday at a reasonable price as compared to the resorts. A good adventure is not only about luxury. It's about, comfort, new experiences, new faces, new milestones and definitely something that won't make you second guess about taking a leap towards your happiness. Therefore, it is necessary to get available with facilities which will not only save your budget but will also let you enjoy your time as well.

These are the differences which make considering guest house a better choice than all luxurious resorts. You might be thinking that when you will have all the comfort in a resort room, then why you consider the guest house? The answer is simple, what's a better way to enjoy Maldives than the Maldivian Style.

Sales Executive of St. Regis Maldives Vommuli Resort

MS. FARSA SAEED

While the statistics regarding employment in the Maldivian tourism sector may indicate that there is a significantly high proportion of male participation, the industry is by no means inherently restricted to one side— there are just as many opportunities for women as well. We are always seeking to empower women and their contributions to the Maldivian tourism industry. The “Women at Work” section features such women currently in the industry and their stories in the hopes that it can assure and inspire others as well.

In this first edition, we had a chat with Ms. Farsa Saeed. She currently works at The St. Regis Maldives Vommuli Resort as a Sales Executive.

Why did you choose to work in a resort?

Because the tourism industry has so much to offer, being the most prominent and highest contributor to the country’s economy. I’ve always been very interested in the idea of working in hospitality since I was doing my O’Levels.

How long have you been working in this resort? Do you enjoy working here?

Three and a half years and I have been enjoying every day of it. By all regards, there is a sense of empowerment and inclusion. There is no gender discrimination here, so I do not feel excluded. There are many opportunities for me to improve my skills, so I am learning a lot every day. I feel that this helps me in empowering myself not just as a hospitality associate but as a person too.

Do you feel there are specific challenges at your workplace that you face as a female?

There are no challenges at the workplaces that I face specifically just because I am a woman. Everyone is treated the same— the working environment is great that way. I do realize however, that if I want to start a family, I may have to move back to Male’. But these can be worked out. Again, my work environment does not impose any challenges on me simply due to my gender.

How did you manage to work through the COVID-19 crisis?

It was devastating to say the least. It was sad and very challenging to the spirits to not see tourists here, but we always had hope. At a personal level, I coped by looking forward. I never stopped working. I was working for the future. Despite working from home, a lot was done within that setting as well. Every day we were doing forecasts and building up strategies and counter-strategies.

How do you see yourself in the future within this industry?

I see myself being a significant contributor to the industry. I would like to learn more, improve my skills and one day, be a more proactive contributor to the tourism industry as a whole in more strategic capacities.

Anything you want to say to the female who wants to join the tourism industry?

Do give it a shot. This industry is full of opportunities which will certainly help you with building your career. You will be exposed to so many learning opportunities both on the job and off the job, which will ultimately help you build not just your career but you as a person as well.

Any Closing Remarks?

Yes! I would like to thank Mr. Ali Nihad and Mr. Amila Handunwala who have been immensely supportive in my career development. A huge appreciation for my family, for always cheering me on. I hope to see more women thriving in this industry and I look forward to being a part of the Maldivian women's success in achieving their career goals in tourism industry.



*“I work for the future,
in the present”*

AN INTERN'S STORY

Aminath Irene Zakariyya, joined Ministry of Tourism as an intern on September 2020. Within three months of her internship, she secured a permanent job at the ministry as a Project Officer.

“Experiencing new cultures, and discovering new places was always exciting, and a source of happiness even at a very young age. Growing up in the capital, I was never privy to the typical “local Maldivian ways”, hence, as I got older, and the more chances I had at travelling between the different islands and atolls, I was more appreciative of how diverse and unique Maldivian cultures and customs were. The chance to experience all the differences and diversity of a country, is one main reason why the tourism industry was so appealing.

The industry itself is a worldwide industry with endless opportunities. Even though Maldives is already a well-established and well recognized tourist destination, the industry is always changing and evolving, leading to unlimited opportunities and prospects.

Initially, I joined the Ministry of Tourism as an intern, to fulfill a requirement for the completion of my undergraduate certificate. I was lucky enough to secure a permanent post within the Ministry, after only a few short weeks of being a college graduate.

Since I am completely new to the work environment, the quick pace of the office was a challenge when compared to a classroom. Working alongside different people, learning new concepts and ideas, as well as developing and updating my skills and knowledge at a moment's notice took some getting used to. However, everyone in the office was always quick to answer a question and provide support should I ever need it.

It was a pleasant surprise to learn that the majority of employees in the Ministry are females. It was a concern originally knowing that the tourism industry employees in the Maldives is heavily made up of men, and I was reluctant to work in the industry outside of a desk job. Though, from seeing the diverse workforce within the ministry itself, and from the staff and employees I have met in the short period that I have been working, I am optimistic that more women are being encouraged to join this field.

Working at the ministry, I have come to learn that this specific segment of the industry is an area I could grow into. Being on the forefront of changes and developments being made to the Maldives tourism, seeing it evolve and becoming a front runner in the world market as a tourist destination.



“I see myself working in the industry for years to come”

AUTHENTIC MALDIVES

By: Business Center Corporation



Authentic Maldives is an initiative of the Ministry of Economic Development to promote genuine local products, which is being operationalized through the Business Center Corporation. The initiative was conceptualized with a vision to identify and nurture the most remarkable creative entrepreneurs in the country, help them embellish their craft and expose their talent to the global marketplace.

What started out as a duty-free shop in Velana International Airport, the Authentic Maldives brand can now be found throughout the capital with shops in both Male' and Hulhumale'. The new stores also accommodate the playful creations of enthusiastic budding entrepreneurs through the introduction of Kids' Corners.

Like its namesake, Authentic Maldives pays heed to Authenticity. Patrons are assured that every product on display is woven by Maldivian hands and fashioned by Maldivian hearts. With over 60 suppliers currently registered with the Authentic Maldives brand, the initiative has received remarkable support from not just its patrons but local creatives as well. This is understandably so as merchants are creditable towards 100% of their quoted price on every sale.

The Authentic Maldives' selection boasts treasures from some of the most untraveled areas of the Maldives, our culture and our history. Patrons are likely to find model trinkets and artefacts from local history, tantalizing delicacies from the south, intricate works of craftsmanship and countless curiosities from the islands over. Though that's not all. Our products span well beyond trinkets from our cultural past. From culturally inspired home-decor, stationaries, clothing, jewelry, delicacies and a variety of cosmetic products, our shops are galleries brimming with entrepreneurial energy.

Plans have been made for Authentic Maldives to expand beyond the capital and commence operations in the Atolls and engage creatives nationwide. It is quite likely that you will encounter our outlets in your travels to the atolls.

Whether you are in the market for a taste of authentic Maldivian flavors, or wish to take a slice of Maldives back home, there's no better way than to patronizing one of our branches. What's more, every patron of the initiative can be assured that they have touched the life of an entrepreneur who is truly Maldivian and have with them a piece that is Authentically from Maldives.

7 REASONS TO #visitMaldivesNOW

By: Mariyam Sharmeela

The Maldives with its white sandy beaches and rich marine life has been a dream destination for many. Privacy combined with safety and security remained one of the best advantages to its visitors since tourism began in the country. These features are complimented by the friendly and welcoming people of the island nation. There are endless reasons to visit the Maldives. Here we list out 7, in random order, which can be related to the current global situation.

1. Sun all year through

Nothing beats a holiday spent on a white sandy beach under the bright sun shining on you, with the cool breezes blowing in from crystal clear blue seas. What better place to find this than the tropical paradise known as the Maldives. These unique atolls formed in a dual chain of islands is a world class holiday destination. Maldives...the sunny side of life, has always been the best getaway one can find in a cold winter season.

2. Geographically Isolated & Segregated Island Resorts and Floating Hotels

At a time of a global pandemic when you are advised to practice social distancing, Maldives has the best solution for holidaymakers. The one-island-one-resort concept, which has been unique to the Maldives since tourism began in the country and the floating hotels, commonly known as Live-aboard Safari Vessels, cruising around the islands, offers visitors a very private holiday choice, completely away from everyone. The safest holiday one can enjoy during this pandemic.

3. FREE Visa on Arrival

What more could one ask for than a hassle free entry after a long tiring flight. The stress of applying for that piece of paper, a.k.a the visa - the dreadful queues, the never-ending documents, the inquisitive questions and then that long wait, especially during this movement restricted time. Maldives has it all sorted out. Free visa on arrival is guaranteed, provided one has a valid travel document. Yes, for the safety of everyone, few precautionary measure are in place during this pandemic, such as a confirmed hotel booking, and a negative PCR test result of not older than 96 hours and of course your declaration, the health declaration form. The easiest entry into a foreign country one can get.





4. Safe Travel Stamp

Being labelled as safe by a global tourism body is the best advantage a country can get in this travel challenged time and the best assurance travelers can get. In recognition of the efforts of Maldives in implementing enhanced health and safety measures, the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) includes Maldives in their safe travel destinations and grants Maldives its “Safe Travels Stamp”. This stamp means Maldives is in line with their safety standards and protocols. Indeed, a remarkable achievement during a time when travel is restricted globally. Safety is the utmost priority.

5. World’s Leading Destination 2020

A very proud moment in the history of tourism in the country was Maldives receiving the award for World’s Leading Destination 2020 at World Travel Awards. Despite the challenges faced during the course of the year with closed borders for international tourists, Maldives made it to the top of this distinguished list, beating other 22 world renowned destinations. A strong endorsement of the popularity of Maldives amongst international tourists.

6. Maldives Border Miles

This is the first of its kind loyalty program in the world exclusively designed for the tourists. Maldives introduced this innovative promotional campaign named the Maldives Border Miles, a three-tiered loyalty program. Tourists who enroll in this program will earn points for each border crossing and the duration of stay with extra points for the visits on special occasions. As you move up the tiers, privileges are rewarded with amazing benefits. Visit, enroll, earn points and get exclusive privileges and benefits. An offer that will be hard to resist.

7. The Maldivian Smile

For many of us, warmth of the welcome we receive in a foreign country can make or break our trip. Maldives is known as friendly country, where the people are incredibly warm, welcoming with a smile on their face. They are sure to go above and beyond to make your holiday truly memorable. Visit Maldives to experience the unforgettable Maldivian smile.

#2022goldenyear

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