

Where to start

# 7 STEPS TO PLAN YOUR MALDIVES DIVE TRIP



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# DIVING IN THE MALDIVES

## Welcome to the Maldives - A Diver's Paradise

Located in the Indian Ocean, southwest of Sri Lanka and India, the Maldives is a tropical island nation made up of more than **1,100 islands** spread across **26 natural atolls**. Its remote location, crystal-clear waters and vibrant marine ecosystems have made it one of the most sought-after scuba diving destinations in the world.

With deep channels, colorful reefs and dramatic drop-offs, the Maldives offers a vast and varied underwater playground. You'll find:

- **Channels** with strong currents that attract large pelagic species
- **Thilas and pinnacles**, rich in marine biodiversity
- **Drift dives** for smooth, effortless exploration
- **Cleaning stations** where manta rays and sharks gather
- **Wrecks** offering hauntingly beautiful underwater adventures

Whether you're a beginner drawn to shallow reefs or an experienced diver chasing adrenaline-packed drift dives, the Maldives caters to every skill level and diving style.

## What you can see underwater

Home to over 1,000 species of fish and more than 200 types of coral, the Maldives delivers unforgettable encounters on every dive. From **tiger sharks, hammerheads and whale sharks** to graceful **manta rays, eagle rays and turtles**, this archipelago is teeming with marine life. Macro enthusiasts will love spotting **nudibranchs, ghost pipefish and mantis shrimp**, while open-water lovers can admire schools of **tuna, jacks and barracuda** swirling in the blue.

With year-round diving and world-famous sites across multiple atolls, the Maldives is a dream destination for divers and marine life lovers alike.

# ATOLL OVERVIEW

NORTHERN ATOLLS

HAA DHAALU

RAA

BAA

HAA ALIFU

SHAVIYANI

NOONU

LHAVIYANI

CENTRAL ATOLLS

THODDOO  
RASDHOO

NORTH ARI

SOUTH ARI

FAAFU

NORTH MALE

SOUTH MALE

VAAVU

SOUTHERN ATOLLS

DHAALU

THAA

MEEMU

LAAMU

DEEP SOUTH

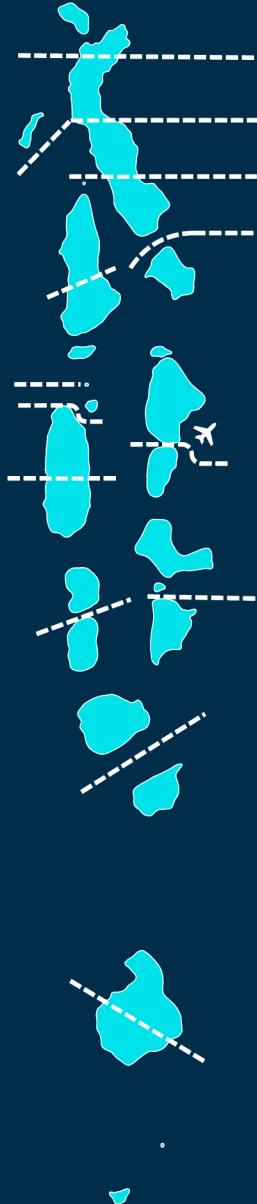
HUVADHOO

GAAFU DHAALU

ADDU

GAAFU ALIF

FUVAHMULAH



# HOW TO PLAN YOUR DIVETRIP

Planning a dive trip to the Maldives can feel overwhelming at first - but don't worry! With a few clear steps, you can design the perfect dive adventure that matches your goals, experience, time and budget.

## 1. Decide what you want to see

Start by identifying your dream underwater encounters. For example:

- Manta rays are seen year-round, but cleaning stations peak at different times.
- Whale sharks are most common in South Ari.
- Tiger sharks are resident in Fuvahmulah year-round.
- Drift dives and pelagic action are best in channel-rich atolls like Vaavu or Huvadho.
- Colorful coral gardens? Try Lhaviyani or Vaavu.

This decision helps you narrow down the best atoll or region to visit.



## 2. Find out where and when

Once you know what you want to see, find out **where it occurs** - and most importantly, **when**. Many pelagic encounters in the Maldives are **seasonal**, depending on **monsoon currents**. For example:

- June - October (Southwest Monsoon): great for manta rays in Baa Atoll and vibrant plankton-rich waters
- November - April (Northeast Monsoon): best visibility, tiger sharks, hammerheads and whale sharks more common in certain areas

Also consider the **sea conditions** and **current strengths** - these vary by season and can affect dive difficulty.

In our [Full Maldives Scuba Diving Guide](#) you will find 250 pages with detailed informations of 22 atolls, the best time to dive and the top dive sites for each atoll including marine life.

## 3. Consider your dive experience and certification

While many dive sites in the Maldives are **beginner-friendly**, some channels, drift dives and deep sites require **more experience**. Here's what to keep in mind:

- **Diving level:** If you have very little experience, an island will be the best option. For liveaboards mostly around 50 dives and Advanced Open Water certification is required.
- **Drift diving:** Common in channels - some current experience helps. If you don't like diving in currents, choose an area with easy dive sites instead of a liveaboard trip to the southern atolls.
- **SMB** (Surface Marker Buoy): Strongly recommended or even required especially on liveaboards.
- **Nitrox:** Often included or available at an extra cost. especially useful on liveaboards.

**Our tip:** You can still enjoy diving in the Maldives as an Open Water diver, but some of the most exciting dives will require either more experience or a guided intro. Diving in the Maldives is more expensive than in other areas of the world, if you fully want to enjoy diving here, have your Open Water, Advanced Open Water and Nitrox courses finished before.

#### 4. Choose your style of diving trip

Now decide how you want to travel and dive:

- **Liveboard diving:** Ideal for experiences divers who want to focus on diving only, explore multiple atolls, dive remote channels and enjoy 3 - 4 dives a day without commuting.
- **Resort island diving:** A more relaxed experience with high comfort, often including private beaches and luxury service - perfect for couples or those looking to relax between dives. Great also when traveling with a non diving partner.
- **Local island diving:** Budget-friendly and authentic, with direct access to great dive sites and more interaction with Maldivian culture. They're ideal for independent travelers, solo divers and those who want to dive from an island without the resort price tag.

Each comes with its own pros and cons, and your choice will depend on your budget, travel style and dive goals.

#### 5. Choose your specific boat, island, or resort

Once you've picked your preferred atoll and travel style, narrow it down to your specific base or boat:

- **Liveboards:** Compare routes (e.g. Central Atolls vs. Deep South), trip length, diver capacity (12-24 guests) and amenities. Most run on a Saturday-Saturday schedule.
- **Resorts:** Decide if you want all-inclusive comfort, spa access, or just a house reef - or combine diving with a romantic or wellness trip.
- **Local islands:** Look for those with strong dive centers, decent reef access and good reviews - some even offer budget rooms directly at the beach.

**Booking platforms, reviews and diving forums** can help you make a confident choice - especially if you're planning your first Maldives trip.



## 6. Book smart

A few final tips to make your trip go smoothly:

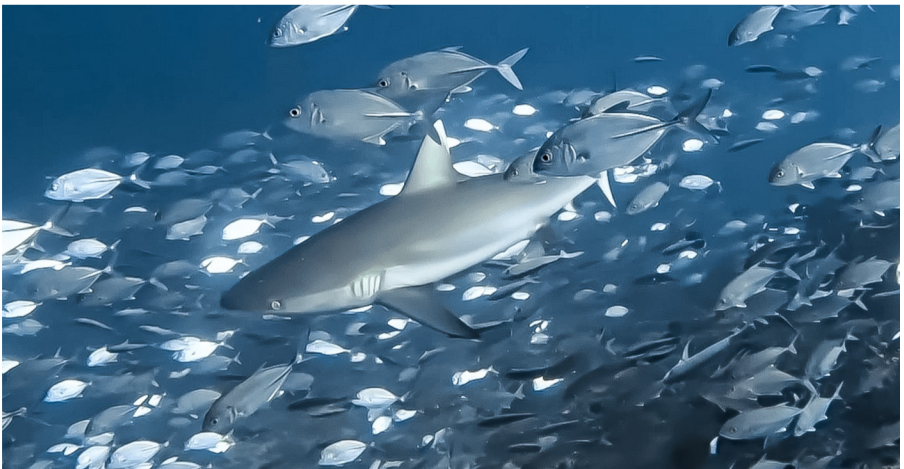
- **Book early**, especially for peak season (December to April)
- **Arrive a day early** if you're flying long-distance to buffer against delays
- **Check what's included** (Nitrox, marine park fees, transfers) so you don't get surprised later
- Get **travel & dive insurance**, especially for liveaboards or remote atolls
- Bring **offline entertainment** (books, music, movies) for surface intervals and evenings without Wi-Fi

## 7. Where to research and book

If you're not using a travel agent, here are some trusted platforms:

- **Liveaboards:** LiveAboard.com, ZuBlu Diving, Blue Water Dive Travel and PADI Travel.
- **Local islands & guesthouses:** Booking.com, Agoda, Airbnb
- **Dive center reviews:** Google Maps, DiveBuddy, ScubaBoard

Also check forums or Facebook groups where divers share trip reports and insider tips.



# THE MOST POPULAR ATOLLS FOR SCUBA DIVERS

## Northern Atolls

The remote northern atolls (Haa Alif, Haa Dhaalu, Shaviyani, Noonu, Raa, Baa, Lhaviyani) offer a quieter, less-explored side of the Maldives with surprisingly rich and varied diving.

**Raa Atoll** is home to manta cleaning stations and spectacular soft coral-covered pinnacles.

**Baa Atoll**, a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, is world-famous for Hanifaru Bay, where hundreds of mantas and whale sharks gather during the southwest monsoon.

**Lhaviyani** adds a variety of wrecks and healthy reef dives, including large schools of snapper and vibrant coral gardens.

## Central Atolls

Diving in the central Maldives (North & South Malé, Rasdhoo, Thoddoo, North & South Ari, Vaavu) means being close to the action - both in terms of marine life and accessibility.

**North and South Malé Atolls** offer impressive channel dives, famous wrecks and popular sites like Banana Reef, HP Reef and Lankan Manta Point, all just a short boat ride from the international airport.

**Rasdhoo** is a shark hotspot where you'll find stunning wall and channel diving with schools of eagle rays and grey reef sharks.

**The Ari Atolls** - both north and south - are a diver's dream with regular whale shark sightings, manta rays, grey reef sharks and dense fish life around thilas.

**Vaavu** is less developed but delivers big rewards: dramatic channels, shark-filled dives like Fotteyo Kandu and night dives with nurse sharks.

## Southern Atolls

A bit further off the tourist trail, the southern atolls (Meemu, Laamu, Thaa, Faafu, Dhaalu) are where diving starts to feel more adventurous.

**Meemu** is known for its strong currents and sharky channels, especially during incoming tides.

**Laamu** charms divers with long drift dives, untouched coral gardens and regular sightings of green turtles and eagle rays.

**Thaa** combines beautiful hard coral formations with exciting pelagic encounters, especially during the northeast monsoon.

## Deep South

The Deep South (Huvadhu, Fuvahmulah, Addu) is the wild frontier of diving in the Maldives - remote, raw and filled with big fish action.

**Huvadhu** (Gaafu Atoll) is the "channel atoll" par excellence and one of the deepest natural atolls on Earth. It boasts some of the country's best shark diving, with abundant grey reef, silky and oceanic blacktip sharks seen in deep channels.

Isolated and unique, **Fuvahmulah** is a volcanic island with no surrounding atoll but world-renowned for consistent tiger shark encounters and sightings of thresher sharks, oceanic manta rays and even hammerheads - often all without a reef, as dives happen in the blue.

In **Addu**, the southernmost atoll, divers can explore the historic British Loyalty Wreck, manta cleaning stations and dive lush coral reefs teeming with fish life and a variety of reef sharks.

# YOUR NEXT STEPS

## Get the Full Maldives Dive Guide

We have created a **250 pages Maldives Scuba Diving Guide** to help you plan your dream dive trip - without doing all research yourself for weeks.

For just **34,99 \$**, you'll get valuable infos about:

- ✓ **217 Top Dive Sites** across **22 atolls**
- ✓ The **best time to dive** for each region
- ✓ **321 Dive Center + Liveaboards**
- ✓ **Dive Safety, Local Islands, Resort Islands, Liveaboards** and **1795 listed Dive Sites**

Check it out here:

[www.thescubacouple.com/store](http://www.thescubacouple.com/store)



Hi, we are **Maïke and Niels - The Scuba Couple**.

We are **Scuba Diving Instructors** since 2021 and worked in the Maldives, Indonesia and Egypt.

As scuba diving content creators, we also share with you our **underwater adventures** and help you to turn your dive dreams into reality with our **dive bucket lists** and **destinations guides**.

**Disclaimer**

All information provided in this guide has been thoroughly and carefully researched and personally verified to the best of our knowledge and experience. However, details can change over time, and while we strive for accuracy and completeness, we are human - and despite all efforts, errors or omissions may occur. Therefore, we cannot guarantee the absolute correctness or completeness of the content.

Please note that while the information was personally researched and checked, AI-assisted tools were used in the writing and editing process to enhance clarity and readability.

We recommend confirming key details (e.g., prices, schedules, regulations) with official sources or providers before making travel or diving decisions.

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