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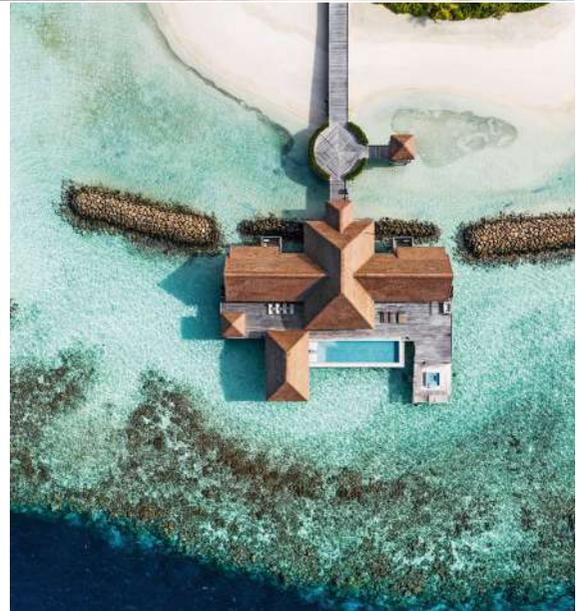
PARADISE FOUND

OUR FAVOURITE MALDIVES HOTELS, FROM BUTLER-SERVICED PRIVATE ISLANDS TO OFF-GRID ECO-RESORTS



WALDORF ASTORIA MALDIVES ITHAAFUSHI

Waldorf Astoria is a brand synonymous with traditional, all-American luxury, and in 2019 the group opened its first Maldives outpost on the white-sand island of Ithaafushi in the South Malé Atoll. The property ticks all the boxes for travellers looking for space and luxury, with a boutique 121 villas strung across eight acres and three private islands like a row of shiny pearls. For those wanting to disconnect from the world, the resort's new Ithaafushi Private Island where one key gives access to five bedrooms across two villas, delicately placed over water and set against tropical greenery. An incredible 11 dining outlets complete this world-class offering, most impressively The Ledge by Australian chef Dave Pynt – whose Singaporean barbecue joint Burnt Ends has a Michelin Star. Families will delight in five swimming pools, a clubhouse and specialist private island activities for children. For those who want to satiate their need for adventure, the Waldorf Young Discovery Park features an expansive water recreation area for the ultimate spills and thrills. Waldorf Astoria Maldives is just a 40-minute speedboat from Velana International Airport, making for the perfect mini-break. Reef villas from AED 6,150; waldorfastoriamaldives.com →





ANANTARA KIHAVAH MALDIVES VILLAS

With 20 years' experience in the luxury hotel market running exquisite properties in Asia, the Indian Ocean, the Middle East, Africa and Europe, Anantara is a region stalwart. The group operates three hotels in the Maldives, and Kihavah Maldives Villas is one of its most resplendent. Set on a private island in a UNESCO biosphere reserve, the focus here is the water, and guests are encouraged by the in-house marine biologist to snorkel with mantas and hawksbill sea turtles before dining in subaqueous restaurant SEA. The resort itself has been recently refurbished its array of beach and overwater villas, now complete with Kajan thatched palm roofs and Balau hardwood decks. Design pays homage to the seafarers of old, marrying Indian, Arab and Portuguese motifs with Maldivian materials. Beyond the tranquillity of the villas, children can expel excess energy at the Thiththi Boli Kids' Club with a programme of activities including Thai boxing and cooking classes. In the evening, the resort's Sky Bar plays host to some epic stargazing for the ultimate peace, tranquillity and wonder. Beach Pool Villas from AED 6,215; anantara.com

CHEVAL BLANC RANDHELI

When selecting a location for its Maldives outpost, LVMH's petite hotel group Cheval Blanc knew it had to be superlative. After all, it has 'intimate maisons' in St Barths, St Tropez, Paris and Courchevel. Arriving by private seaplane sees 46 villas rise from the lagoon like a dream-like mirage, and guests are welcomed into the exclusive Noonu Atoll retreat by way of a cool airport lounge. There's a distinctly French Riviera vibe, from the design by Jean-Michel Hathy – the man behind One&Only Reethi-Rah – to the Guerlain Spa, the only one in the Maldives, which sits across the water on its own island. Also on its own island, a four-bedroom villa and jetty offering the perfect escape for a family. Other accommodation includes garden, lagoon and overwater villas. And while the Maldives may not be surf-ready all the time, the resort takes care of that for you with their surf simulator – again, the only one of its kind in the island nation.

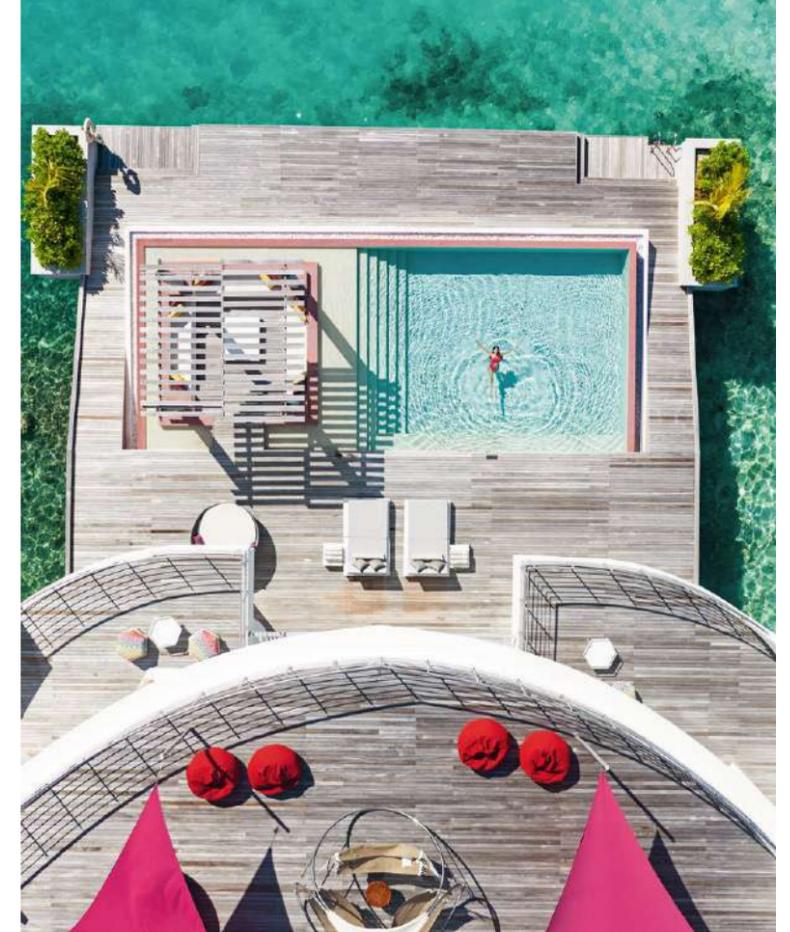
Five restaurants and three bars are on offer – a highlight being chic Le 1947 dishing up French savoir-faire. Those celebrating should take advantage of the bespoke itinerary service, allowing for remote islands picnics and sailings on the resort's own 30-metre superyacht Azimut. Island villas from AED 34,115; chevalblanc.com →



LUX* SOUTH ARI ATOLL AND NORTH MALÉ ATOLL

If one was unsure of the level of extravagance offered by this flashy hotel group, the clue is in the name. Aptly named LUX* Resorts operates two five-star properties in the Indian Ocean archipelago, one in the South Ari Atoll and another in the North Malé, which opened in 2019. With 193 private villas dotted along two-miles of private caster sugar sands, LUX* South Ari Atoll Resort & Villas is a haven for watersports lovers. Days are spent at the resort's PADI centre exploring limpid waters and coral reefs teeming with whale sharks, or indulging in the island's eight eateries. Come evening and guests can take part in flood-lit tennis, visits to the Beach Rouge beach club and impromptu LUX* events like cinema screenings. Across the ocean in the North Malé Atoll, LUX*'s newest Maldives retreat brings a Miami-meets-Maldives theme to the fore with a white-washed, contemporary aesthetic. Families can enjoy a private sandbank picnic with a side of kitesurfing during the day, and come night, a rooftop private cinema experience complete with yoga and a beachfront barbecue with a personal chef.

LUX* North Malé Atoll villas from AED 3,725; LUX* South Ari Atoll villas from AED1,135; luxresorts.com



HARD ROCK HOTEL MALDIVES

Utter the words Hard Rock to any city slicker and their mind will immediately fill with vibrant colours and rock and roll music – traits that distinguish this iconic brand. Little do many know, but the group has an outpost in the Maldives, located in the indigo waters of Emboodhoo Lagoon. While most Maldivian resorts pride themselves on utter relaxation, Hard Rock Hotel turns this on its head with a bounty of entertainment for both parents and children. There's even direct access to The Marina Crossroads Maldives – the largest lifestyle hub in the region filled with shopping, dining and entertainment. Kids can enjoy 'The Sound of Stay' music programme, which offers complimentary use of Fender guitars and Crosley record players for in-room jam sessions, or visit the Roxity Kids and Teen Spirit Clubs – where music-inspired characters double as childminders. While life here is more active than neighbouring hotels, one thing Hard Rock didn't change is the perfect Maldivian aesthetic. The hotel is all overwater villas, suites and family-friendly duplexes, but with colourful touches like art, bunk beds and a carefully curated collection of records on a Crosley turntable. Of course, it wouldn't be complete without the classic Hard Rock memorabilia. Silver family suites from AED 3,675; hardrockhotels.com





VELAA PRIVATE ISLAND MALDIVES

When Czech couple Radka and Jiri Šmejč stumbled across a peaceful island in the Noonu Atoll 116 miles north of Malé they knew they had to make it their home, and in time an exclusive hotel. A passion project on a grand scale ensued, building an ultra-luxury island escape using earthy materials such as Borneon wood and stone from Jordan. This is a design lover's dream, with the 47 villas clad in teak and bamboo and boasting touches like nautical artwork, Italian artisan patio furniture, overwater dining gazebos, infinity pools and hanging chairs. A romantic pool residence made for honeymooners is only accessible by boat, while the two-story four-bedroom Nika Residence, designed by the renowned Patricia Urquiola, appeals to well-to-do families. When not enjoying molecular fine dining or finding balance in the Velaa spa, adventures await such as golfing (with the help of a resident pro) and enjoying high-tech flyboards, hoverboards, electric surfboards and the latest tandem jetovator. Radka and Jiri are always looking to welcome guests, be it those in search of barefoot luxury or global experts who pop in to conduct sessions such as top golfer Pablo Larrazábal and Pilates guru Dmitri Tkatchev. Velaa is also in the process of hiring a private teacher to accommodate extended family stays. Beach pool villas from AED 8,200; velaaprivateisland.com →



THE RESIDENCE MALDIVES AT DHIGURAH

Appearing to almost float in the limpid Indian Ocean is one of the largest resort offerings in the Maldives, The Residence at Dhigurah and its neighbouring The Residence at Falhumaafushi. The resorts reside in one of the deepest and most untouched atolls, Gaafu Alifu, its waters home to 250 coral variants and 1,200 species of marine life. While Falhumaafushi draws honeymooners and romance seekers with its organic materials and soothing ambience, Dhigurah entices families thanks to its 173 villas – each with a private pool – and lush outdoor playground. Inquisitive children will love the Turtle Kids Club which offers the freedom to explore indigenous flora and sauna, and other child-friendly activities span kayaking, cooking lessons, children's yoga and arts and crafts. There's a distinct tropical home-away-from-home feeling and the focus on family is palpable. However, parents can luxuriate in the serene Clarins spa and enjoy romantic sunset dinners thanks to babysitting services. Beach pool villas from AED3,045; cenizaro.com

BAROS MALDIVES

In a turquoise sea of big-hitting international resorts, Baros prides itself on being 100 per cent Maldivian. This tiny boutique island retreat in the North Malé Atoll has been welcoming sun-seekers since 1973, so guests can expect a tried and tested level of service and experience. Here, guests are known by name, not villa number and favourite drinks are remembered by ever-smiling staff – staff who go out of their way to organise once-in-a-lifetime experiences. As far as excursions go, the resort's piano bar is one of the most unique in the entire island state, a floating platform which transforms at will into a yoga studio, massage parlour picnic, romantic dinner site – anything you want, in fact. Other cultural immersions include a masterclass in Maldivian survival skills – think pike fishing and the art of coconut opening – and romantic cruises on the traditional dhoni boat. A bevy of high-tech watertoys, six eateries and sleek contemporary villas elevate the boutique experience to the award-winning five-star establishment – just 25 minutes by boat from Malé airport.

Deluxe Villas from AED 3,220; baros.com



BEST OF / MALDIVES

THE NAUTILUS MALDIVES

Sometimes a new kid comes along and shakes the ground so hard you're forced to stop and take notice, especially one with such a daring new idea. 'Time stands still' is the concept of Nautilus, an experimental new luxury concept set in the sun-dappled Baa Atoll just 30 minutes by seaplane from Malé. The private island retreat was designed as an escape from the constraints and routines many of us find ourselves trapped in. There are no clocks, no opening or closing times, no dress codes and no experience or request too big. Massages can be had at 3 am, breakfast can be had on a deserted sandbank, a boat ride away, at dinner time, and a private butler works tirelessly to create Hollywood-esque days, or, leave them unscripted. This fluidity flows through into the design of the property, from the elliptical curving staircase to its 26 beach-front or overwater villas – personal sanctums with glittering chandeliers, whimsical bohemian interiors and private pools shaded by swaying palms. Overwater villas have the advantage of coming with glass flooring for marine life watching. Be it a star-lit sandbank dinner, manta ray diving, yoga in the overwater pavilion or simply taking in the turquoise blue melting into deep indigo, anything is possible.

OceanhousesfromAED9,635;thenautilusmaldives.com

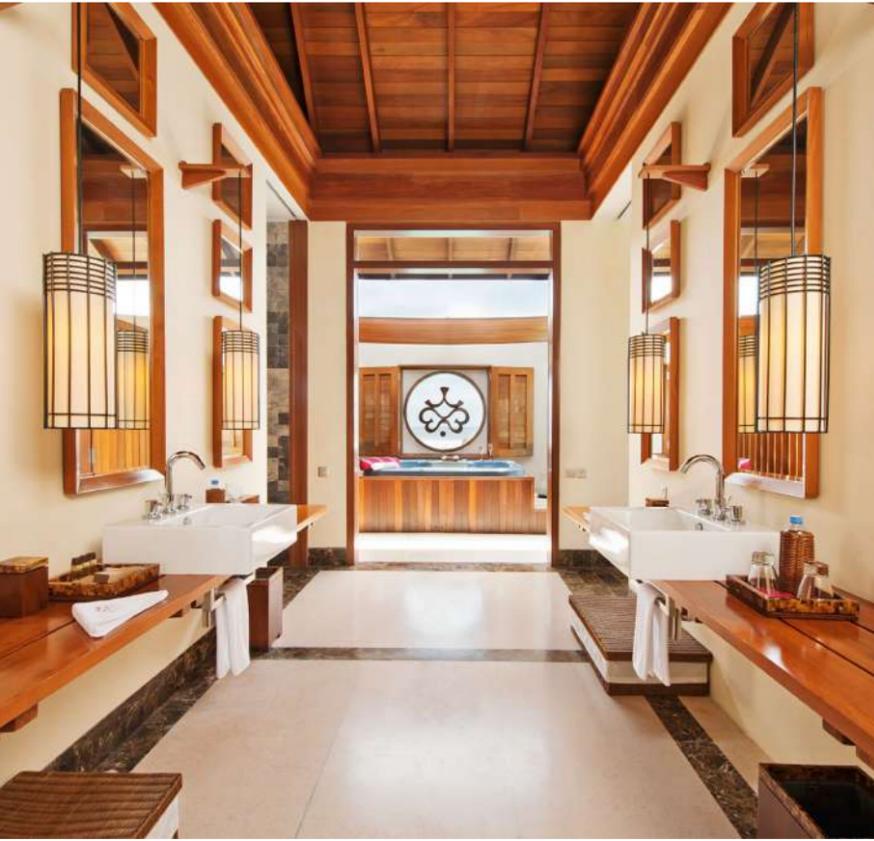


VAKKARU MALDIVES

Family values are the modus operandi at Vakkaru Maldives, an island resort in the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve of Baa Atoll – just a 30-minute seaplane from Malé. Coming into land, guests are met with a dazzling tapestry of 113 thatch-topped villas, powdered-sugar sands, sports and tennis courts and towering coconut trees – 2,300 to be precise. The resort is one of the most family-friendly in the archipelago and its sprawling villas are akin to a family home with pantries and cosy rooms with twin beds. There's also the regionally renowned Parrotfish and Coconut Clubs. At Parrotfish, three- to 12-year-olds can relax in adorable miniature eco-chic furniture in between cooking classes and arts and crafts.

At teen haunt the Coconut Club, open 24 hours a day, there's table tennis, foosball and billiards. Vakkaru prides itself on its ability to create bespoke bucket-list experiences, and for that reason also wins when it comes to being a honeymoon or wedding destination – both of which it boldly advertises as.

Beach family pool villas from AED 7,125;
vakkarumaldives.com →



VILLA HOTELS & RESORTS

Few hotel companies are as entrenched in the Maldives as Villa Hotels & Resorts, a brand founded in 1986 and one which has truly made this paradise nation its home. The group has more keys in the archipelago than any other hotel group, offering guests the choice of five villas across various atolls ranging from a three-star upbeat Fun Island Resort & Spa to the romantic five-star Paradise Island Resort & Spa. Aptly names Fun, Sun, Royal, Holiday and Paradise offer something for each traveller, from Maldives newbies looking for a guided experience to active-seeking travellers and honeymooning couples after barefoot luxury. Fun Island, situated on a beautiful lagoon, offers a distinctly Mediterranean-style party vibe with a disco. Sun, on the other hand, is more about taking it slow, getting out into nature and embracing family time. Royal Island ups the ante with a secluded wellness retreat while peaceful Holiday Island is currently undergoing an extensive renovation. For honeymooners and luxury seekers, there's secluded Paradise Island – where overwater bungalows are hidden by thick greenery and swaying coconut trees. All properties offer excursions like snorkelling in coral gardens and exploring the spectacular local scenery by canoe or boat. Be sure to try out catching your own fish for supper and exploring the neighbouring, uninhabited islands. Beach pool villas on Paradise Island from AED 2,015; villahotels.com



OZEN COLLECTION

In an archipelago of hospitality stalwarts, Ozen Collection is the bright young thing attracting a cool and contemporary set. The brand is the baby of Atmosphere Hotels and Resorts, who, in 2020, took over the management of two Maldivian properties and transformed them into the uber-trendy Ozen Collection. First to be re-born was Ozen Reserve Bolifushi, formerly Jumeirah Vittaveli, set on the private island of Vittaveli in the Kaafu Atoll just 20 minutes by catamaran from Malé airport. There are just 89 suites and villas, built to resemble a traditional Maldivian village, but underneath the typical thatched roofs, a contemporary design prevails with shades of rust, ochre, almond and quirky artwork. Beach suites are perfect for families, accommodating up to six guests and most come with 24-hour butler service. Over in the South Malé Atoll, brand new Ozen Life Maadgoo sees two sandy oases linked by a wooden bridge. Highlights include underwater M6M – a brilliantly blue-hued dining room watched over by graceful manta rays – and the tranquil Elena spa offering uninterrupted lagoon views. Despite its luxury credentials, you won't find any stuffiness at either property. Staff call out greetings as they zoom past on golf buggies and organise hedonistic beach parties come the weekend. Earth villa sunrise from AED 5,000; ozen-maadgoo.com. Earth villa sunrise from AED 7,050; ozenreserve-bolifushi.com →



KANDIMA MALDIVES

Kandima opened its doors in 2017 with the promise to go against the grain. For starters, it boasted the largest pool in the entire nation (twice the size of an Olympic pool to be exact) and the vibe was distinctly different to its island counterparts. While other resorts yearned for honeymooners and affluent families, Kandima set out to entice a younger, 'cooler' crowd, combining traditional hospitality with technology and innovation. On opening its doors, a well-heeled set descended, coming to party in the Breeze Pool Bar and Beach Club, visit the fitness pavilion and even take on sky diving. Along with thrill-seeking globetrotters, the resort also appeals to families, thanks to its renowned children's club Kandiland, equipped with a pirate ship and large trampoline, sprawling sports field and the on-site waterpark. The Kula Art Studio with its arts and crafts offers the perfect location for creative family bonding time. Unlike its neighbours, Kandima prides itself on affordability, and guests can choose from 264 studios or villas which include beachfront apartments but also the typically Maldivian overwater villa experience. All have a contemporary aesthetic with plenty of colourful artwork and bold soft furnishings. Sky studios from AED 1,125; kandima.com →



KURUMBA MALDIVES

The Maldives was a very different place in 1972, a remote island state in the Indian Ocean barely known to the outside world. Its isles were inhabited by fishing folk and only a small airstrip provided a connection to the surrounding subcontinent. Then everything changed, with the opening of the first, and now most iconic hotel in the nation on the island of Vihamanaafushi, Kurumba Maldives. Named after the coconut plantation on the once uninhabited outcrop, Kurumba has grown into a majestic beast in its 48-year tenure, still surrounded by swaying coconut trees but now home to 180 suites, bungalows and villas. Rooms are dotted along the white sands and in verdant gardens, all with rustic, eco-chic interiors and cream and pistachio hues. With no overwater bungalows, there's even more opportunity for complimentary snorkelling and scuba diving in the surrounding sapphire waters and reef. Night snorkelling is also available for a new perspective. Entertainment can be found from sunrise to sunset, where the island comes alive with boduberu dancing and drums, and there are eight dining venues. Stepping into Middle Eastern Al Qasr you'll be transported to the souks of Arabia, while shisha lounge Fez resembles a jewel-hued Moroccan Riyadh. The holistic Veli Spa completes the offering, a sanctuary of solace and positive energy utilising dhivehi beys, a traditional Maldivian herbal medicine incorporated into treatments. Kurumba has stood the test of time, and it's easy to see why.

Doubles from AED 945 per night; kurumba.com



ONE&ONLY REETHI-RAH

Over a decade since its conception in early 2010, One&Only Reethi-Rah remains at the top of the pile when it comes to deeply glamorous Maldivian resorts, in fact, it could well be the most glamorous of them all. Here, women in Chanel swimsuits lounge on overwater terraces, teens whizz past on jet skis and parents partake in long lunches of wagyu beef, sashimi and lobster. Its stylish design is the work of Belgian architect Jean-Michel Gathy, marrying European elegance with traditional Maldivian touches. The 130 villas and bungalows offer infinity pools, private sun terraces and stone baths designed for two – and with the entire island to play with, there's a distinct feeling of privacy and isolation. There's an Ayurvedic spa, focused on traditional and all-natural products, offering a menu of ESPA facials and deeply restorative abhyanga and shirodhara sessions, along with the purva karma four-hand massage. It's not uncommon for world-leading therapists to jet in to offer Tibetan sound therapy and yoga. Guests dress for dinner and descend on the array of dimly-lit eateries serving local and international fare, and after enjoy star-lit strolls on one of 12 private beaches. But families should not be put off by the opulence, as under new general manager Jean-Luc Naret the hotel got itself a new water-park extension to the KidsOnly and OneTribe, and there's a fantastic teen zone with table tennis and of course, plenty of watersports options. Beach villas from AED 4,460; oneandonlyresorts.com



SIX SENSES LAAMU

Just a short seaplane and boat ride from Malé airport brings you to a palm- and mangrove-fringed paradise, where sustainability and luxury go hand-in-hand. Six Senses Laamu is the only resort in the southern Laamu Atoll, and while its Maldivian neighbours focus on showstopping experiences, this resort is more focused on saving its beloved paradise. Woodwork design features heavily across the 97 spacious thatched villas, where materials such as hessian and linen give an instant home-away-from-home feel. To discourage air-con, beds are draped in white canopies and angled wooden slats open to offer a gentle evening breeze. Guests here spend days at the Ayurvedic-focused spa or pottering in warm jade-green waters. With such waters, it's easy to forget there's no swimming pool. Children will love The Den, a club emulating Six Senses' eco-friendly mantra encouraging children to learn through natural play from building sandcastles, planting herbs, cooking pizzas and competing in scavenger hunts. Elsewhere, snorkelling right off the villas into the surrounding coral reef gardens is a requisite rite of passage. This is nature and hospitality in perfect harmony. Lagoon water villas from AED 5,465; sixsenses.com



HERITANCE AARAH MALDIVES

Born in the terraced hills of Sri Lanka, Heritance is a hotel group pioneering the sustainable tourism movement. Well versed in promoting, while also protecting its beloved home nation, the group turned its attention to the Maldives, opening Heritance Aarah in the sun-bleached Raa Atoll. As Heritance's only Maldives resort, love and attention have been poured into every triangular thatched bungalow – some nestled amongst verdant vegetation and others reaching far into the turquoise waters. Many offer private plunge pools and come with butler service. The resort itself has the quintessentially Maldivian island look, blankets of white sand and endless wooden boardwalks hovering over the ocean. With such a sublime setting to preserve, Heritage as a brand takes sustainability seriously, installing fuel-generators, energy-saving LED lighting, water-saving fixtures and energy-efficient air conditioning. The six restaurants and four bars trot the globe, all housed on the beach or under thatched roofs with wooden beams. There's Sri Lankan cuisine, of course, but also Middle Eastern, Parisian and Polynesian. A real pull is its on-site medi spa – one of a handful in the region, offering holistic therapies as well as anti-ageing and beautification treatments. Days here are spent lolling on perfect sands in between fly boarding, kite sailing, catamaran sailing, windsurfing and snorkelling. Beach villas from AED 2,600; heritancehotels.com



GILI LANKANFUSHI

Gili Lankanfushi is exactly how one would imagine a luxury Robinson Crusoe island escape – wild and enchanting with thick vegetation and rustic thatched cottages almost bobbing in the Indian Ocean. One of the oldest and best, Gili opened as Soneva Gili in 2000 as the first resort to be completely over water, and following a devastating fire last year has risen like a phoenix from the ashes. Reborn Gili features the same rustic thatch villas clad in local wood, and there are billowing white sheets draped over recycled teak bedframes, catamaran nets strung above the water and handmade furnishings like custom rocking chairs and woven lamp shades. There’s now the largest overwater villa in the world, and in true castaway style, some villas cast out to sea are only reachable by boat. Slide off your private day bed and you’ll find a green-hued wonderland. An organic garden and orchard provides fresh produce for four dining outlets (with excellent vegan fare) while diving in the house reef brings attention to the resort's coral rehabilitation project. Elsewhere, and the warming, lamp-lit Meera Spa also shows Gili’s passion for nurturing, offering holistic treatments from masters in residence and visiting practitioners. Think this is a hippie retreat? The Mr Friday yacht, gastronomic grape and dine experience and floating Private Reserve palace might just change your mind.

Villa suites from AED 3,670; gili-lankanfushi.com



SONEVA JANI

Sonu and Eva Shivdasani were ahead of their time. When they landed on the deserted island of Kunfunadhoo 26 years ago, they went about creating a luxury eco-retreat from the soft sand up. Little did they know this would become one of the hottest travel trends. Almost 20 years since the opening of Soneva Fushi, Soneva Jani entered as the bubblier, younger sibling in 2016. What sets Jani apart is it’s made up of five tiny inlets in the Noonu Atoll, creating a paradise world of luxury villas and facilities like a floating open-air cinema and observatory. Overwater villas made from sustainable wood snake of jetties, their stone-hued interiors hiding open-air bathrooms, floors with portholes and bedrooms with retractable ceilings. Some have rooftop waterslides plunging into the lagoon. Alternatively, ‘Crusoe Residences’, enclaved by dense mangrove forest, serve as private havens. As the most vivacious in the Soneva set, Jani entered ‘Chapter 2’ last year, adding 27 overwater villas, three dining experiences and a sprawling 1,742sq m wellness centre with aerial yoga, Ayurveda treatments and Vitamin IV therapy. Food, too, is sustainability sourced, with menus by innovative raw food chef Diana Von Cranach born in Jani’s own organic herb and veggie garden. Make sure to try the secret menu served in an ever-changing secret location. Soneva Jani is the future of Maldives resort, and the rest of the archipelago can only await Chapter 3.

Water reserve villas from AED 8,450; soneva.com



DUSIT THANI MALDIVES

If 2020 has shown us anything, it’s the importance of spending time with loved ones. With travel starting to carefully open up, it’s now possible to take bonding time to paradisiacal shores like the Maldives, where family-centric resorts like Dusit Thani offer both escapism and bonding time. The resort brings Thai hospitality to the Indian Ocean, sitting on the shores of Mudhdoo Island in the Baa Atoll – the Maldives’ first UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve. The focus here is spending time together as a family, from staying in the beach and water villas with Thai and Maldivian interiors to enjoying Thai cooking classes, island bicycle tours and marine-spotting excursions. The Ban Sanook Kids Club is the jewel of Dusit’s crown, where kind staff stir the imagination with activities like sandcastle building, T-shirt painting and pizza making. A carnival of colourful coral, sea turtles and tropical marine life all call the waters of the Baa Atoll home, and are easily explored from the hotel’s renowned Ocean Dive Centre – whether you’re a certified diver or new to scuba. The cuisine is also pretty spectacular, thanks to Dusit’s Thai roots. Be transported to the hawker stalls of Bangkok at Benjarong, enjoy the spectacle of an open kitchen at the Sea Grill or take breakfast quite literally in your private pool with the delivery of a floating gourmet spread.

Beach villas from AED 2,000; dusit.com

RAFFLES MALDIVES MERADHOO

As far as Maldives resorts go, Raffles Maldives Meradhoo is about as remote as it gets, hidden away in the southernmost reaches of the archipelago in the equator-skimming Gaafu Alifu Atoll. The hotel is uniquely set over two private palm-strewn islands – Beach Island, housing 21 villas and the six-bedroom Royal Residence, and Overwater Island with its 16 resplendent overwater residences. Trendy colonial-style interiors take inspiration from its Singaporean sister, with striped monsoon blinds, louvered doors, teak touches and a sea of blues, greys and organic sea shapes. Breakfasts of Sri Lankan egg hoppers and wellness bowls are served with complimentary neck massages, and lunch involves something freshly caught from the surrounding waters. Thanks to its almost untouched location, it’s possible to see marine life without venturing beneath the waves. Around 20 hawksbill turtles live around the island and guests are encouraged to keep an eye out for Apollo, who routinely pops his head out to say hello. This year Raffles also launched a new marine experience, where guests venture out into the ocean on a traditional dhoni to spot magnificent whale sharks – reaching up to 12 metres in length. To recuperate, a Balinese-inspired spa performs soothing signature treatments with the help of warm coconut oil and Tibetan singing bowls. Well worth the 55-minute flight and 15-minute boat trip from Malé.

Beach villas from AED 3,745; raffles.com →





ST. REGIS MALDIVES VOMMULI RESORT

Space age St. Regis is incongruous in the jade-green waters of the Dhaalu Atoll, with its retro-futuristic design straight out of *The Jetsons*. Villas, crafted entirely from wood, are an enfilade of futuristic and high-tech touches, like Bang & Olufsen sound systems, modular ceiling lamps, under cabinet lighting, rainforest showers and private pools. The grandest of all 77 is the John Jacob Astor suite, named after the man who built the original St Regis in New York. While 8,760 miles away, this level of traditional all-American luxury prevails. There's butler service, grand coral chandeliers and the famed St. Regis sabrage ceremony. Half a dozen utopian eateries keep guests fed and watered, highlights being the overwater Whale Bar – a trendy tapas joint in the 'shell' of a whale shark – and Cargo, an Indian street food pop-up hidden in the jungle. Ask your personal Jeeves to organise a trip to the Iridium Spa, or perhaps a private island picnic by way of resident resort yacht Norma. For those tempted by activity, a superlative house reef lies beneath the waves accessed from the Vommuli Dive and Water Sports Center. Mr Astor himself would certainly approve. Garden villas from AED 2,650; marriott.com

JA MANAFARU

Board a seaplane in Malé and 75 minutes later you'll reach the northernmost tip of the Maldives, almost touching the islands of India and their own secluded oceanic world. Here in the Haa Alifu Atoll is where proudly Emirati JA Resorts and Hotels chose to house their one and only Maldives resort, taking over the Beach House Iruveli and transforming it into a 35-acre family holiday haven. Each of the resort's boutique 83 villas has an outdoor bathroom, private pool and soothing interiors – lots of dreamy blues, greens and palm prints. There's a distinct family vibe thanks to a supervised children's club, the CoolZone, and 'no adults allowed' ChillZone teen's club. Little ones can enjoy treasure hunting, cookery classes, water Olympics and the famous crab race challenge, and even the surliest teen won't say no to dolphin watching excursions. Time is deliciously spent water skiing, catamaran sailing to nearby uninhabited islands or learning to dive in the hotel's own five-star PADI centre. There's even a marine research centre, Seatopia, with a friendly resident marine biologist on hand to nurture the island's thriving sea colony. Come night, the sprawling jungle lights up like an enchanted forest, hiding al fresco eateries like Japanese White Orchid and beachfront Ocean Grill. Last year the resort became completely all-inclusive spanning dining, experiences and beverages.

Beach villas from AED 2,030; jaresortshotels.com 

