

Are you ready for an island adventure in the magical Maldives?

 By [Sindy Peters](#)

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The Maldives is everything you imagine it to be and then some. Your heart will do its first flip when you fly over the brilliant turquoise waters that surround each atoll - truly a sight to behold from the air.



Image: The Standard Huruvahli

Then there's the pristine white sandy beaches that seem to stretch on endlessly. The house reefs teem with sea life and are all but a few swim strokes away. Combine this rich natural beauty with delectable food, bottomless cocktails, and the endearing hospitality of the Maldivian people, and you've got yourself a magical getaway.

All of this is just an eight-hour flight direct from Joburg, exclusive to local travel agency [Priority Escapes](#). Huzzah, for no longer having to lose precious time in transit while stopping over in Dubai or Doha!



Image: Obalu Select Lobigili

Now, to be honest, the Maldives was never really on my radar for two reasons. I'd assumed it to be well outside my travel budget and that it largely involved lazing around all day sipping cocktails. Turns out, not only *can* I afford to visit the Maldives (with a few less Mr D deliveries), but as a destination, it offers a considerable activity menu for the novelty-seeking traveller.

A seven-day trip with Priority Escapes, hosted at Kuramathi, The Standard Huruvahli, Dhigali, Obalu Select Lobigili and Sangeli, completely changed my perspective*. There's certainly something to everyone's taste among this special group of atolls.

Love is always in the Maldivian air

Just a few minutes from Malé is [Obalu Select Lobigili](#), which literally translates to 'love island'. This five-star, adults-only haven provides the ideal getaway to stoke the romance in your relationship. It's all roses, sweet treats, and champers once you arrive, celebrating love at every turn.



Image: Obu Select Lobigili

The SunNest Beach Pool Villas, with their warm, earthy red interiors and open-air bathrooms, are so cosy, you and your significant other will probably spend most of your time tucked away here, enjoying the private pool and the uninterrupted lagoon view from your veranda.

First-rate fun for the whole family

While there are countless resorts to celebrate love in the Maldives, there are just as many for those seeking a more family-friendly vaycay. [Obu Select Sangeli](#) is one of the best, with its kids club offering an array of activities to keep your youngsters entertained throughout their stay.



Image: Obu Select Sangeli

The island also sports a beach slide, adding an extra element of family fun as you and your loved ones happily shriek your way into the warm lagoon water. Sangeli offers boat trips, diving and snorkelling excursions, too, among other water-based activities, for your not-so-little ones.

[Kuramathi](#), one of the most established resorts in the Maldives, is another island favoured by families. So popular is its Bageecha Kids Club that you may have trouble getting your kids tucked into their beds at night.



Image: Kuramathi

The centre offers nature walks, treasure hunts, beach activities, as well as marine life education together with its Eco Centre. The resort's spacious two-bedroom, duplex beach houses are ideal for families, offering spectacular views of either the lagoon or reef.

A seascape adventure

If you're keen to get a bit more than your feet wet, there are plenty of watersport options for the adventurous. Snorkelling in the Maldives is as easy as stepping out onto the balcony of your premium water villa, down a short staircase, and into the ocean you go.



Image: The Standard Huruvalhi

Foiled by some inclement early-monsoon weather, I didn't get to experience [The Standard's](#) house reef, which is said to be one of the best. But we did manage to squeeze in a guided trip with their crew which did not disappoint! The variety of otherworldly coral life and their brilliant colours makes the Maldives just as beautiful below as it is from above.

Sadly, the reefs in the Maldives, like many others across the world, are visibly stressed due to rising sea temperatures. While researchers work to find solutions to aid in reef recovery, the future of this spectacular underwater world remains uncertain. If you do have the opportunity to experience it, I suggest you grab it with both hands.



Image: The Standard Huruvahli

Other ocean-side adventures on offer at all five resorts include kayaking, stand-up paddling, jetskiing, glass-bottom boat excursions, dolphin cruises, whale shark snorkelling, night fishing, turtle snorkelling, and more.

A feast for foodies

The food all week long was certainly worth writing home about. There was always something for everyone's palate, even the vegan among us. The buffets were spectacular, but the à la carte restaurants really hit the culinary ball out the park.



Image: Obu Select Sangeli

From Island Barbeque's flambéed jumbo prawns at Kuramathi to the spiced chocolate kulfi at Dhigali's Jade Restaurant, the quality of the food was a sensory delight.

There's an international menu available at every resort, but don't shy away from the traditional cuisine. The Standard's Gudaguda is an absolute must, offering a flavour-packed, authentic Maldivian dining experience.



Image: The Standard Huruvalhi

The menu is inspired by locally caught seafood, coconut milk curries, regional fruits and veggies, spiced rice and homemade bread, all enjoyed while dining in a traditional style, low to the floor on cushions.

When visiting the Maldives, do yourself a favour and arrive hungry!

(Re)treat yourself

Possibly the best massage I've ever had, I highly recommend booking a treatment at The Standard's spa. I'm not sure whether it was the ocean air, the oils, the marvellous masseuse, or a combination of all three, but the world and all its troubles magically melted away.



Image: The Standard Huruvalhi

The spa also has a coed hammam for you and yours to sample the traditional communal bathing culture of Morocco and Turkey - scrub and mud provided.

If you're looking for a holistic, luxury retreat, [Dhigali](#), with its lush natural vegetation - 80% of which was preserved during construction, provides the most serene space to reconnect with your best inner self. The soothing scent of incense wafts throughout the resort, keeping you in a zen state of mind as you float about the island.



Image: Dhigali

Its spa blends seamlessly into the surroundings, providing the ideal setting for deep relaxation. Dhigali offers three- to seven-day spa packages to help you find your bliss, drawing on indigenous traditions to heal and energise both body and mind.

Take an Instawalk in paradise

Influencer or not, the Maldives is an Instagrammers paradise - no filter needed. The most mesmerising views are 100% from the air so if possible, secure yourself a seaplane flight. Not only is the experience itself quite novel, but you're sure to get some great snaps from up high.



Image: The Standard Huruvahli

Operating from Malé, Trans Maldivian Airways runs the world's largest fleet of seaplanes. It will cost you about \$300 per trip, but it's well worth the splurge.

Everything is so picturesque, you just need to point and click in any direction to get a great photo. But capturing and sharing the charm and spirit of the Maldives is no easy feat. It's a destination guaranteed to ignite all your senses.



Image: Dhigali

There's no living vicariously, you absolutely have to experience the magic of the Maldives for yourself.

**Sindy Peters was a guest of Priority Escapes and its partner resorts.*

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