

CENTRAL ATOLLS BEST FOR WHALE SHARKS AND MANTA RAYS WHOLE YEAR ROUND

Central Atolls Maldives

Start/End: Male

3 dives per day, 16-17 in 7 nights total

Atolls: North Male, South Male, North Ari, South Ari, Vaavu, (Rasdho)

When: All year round. Itineraries prepared and specific dive sites carefully chosen depending on the monsoon.

For who: 30+ dives. If only OWD certified, you have to do an AOWD course onboard.
Familiarity with drift dives recommended.
Highly recommended for non-divers!

Type of dives: Spectacular channel-drift dives, wrecks, pinnacles, world-famous night dives

Marine life: Divers will be astonished by the variety of marine life. From nudibranchs and eels, through schools of reef fish, eagle rays, sharks and turtles to manta rays and whale sharks. Simply the best of Maldives
Manta cleaning stations whole year round
Whale sharks whole year round
Manta rays by night whole year around
Whale sharks by night from December to April

Dive Sites Maldives:

*easy **medium difficult ***challenging

NORTH MALE ATOLL:

Fish Tank*

Directly in front of a fish factory in the North Male Atoll, large schools of stingrays gather again and again, looking for food. Mostly you can find them on a sandy slope with rubble, so that you can watch the spectacle easy or if there is current, you can also hook there. You can also find all kinds of moray eels there. If you are lucky, a guitar shark or even a tiger or bull shark will appear.

Lankan Beyru (Manta Point) *

The outer reef of the Paradise Island resort, not far from the airport island. The main attraction of the site are manta rays coming to the cleaning station during the southwest monsoon. The divesite is relatively easy to access, with small currents and is very often considered as a good dive to start the week. The cleaning station itself is a large coral block covered with anemones and full of fish life. It is also very common to come across whitetip reef sharks, turtles and napoleons.

SOUTH MALE ATOLL:

Embudu Kandhu ***

This is a famous channel between the ocean and Embudu Island, located east-west of Embudu Island. The channel is around 35-45 meters deep, and a thila is located on its North-East side where a variety of sea life such as sharks, hump head wrasses, eagle rays, and barracudas can be explored. The current is strong, making it ideal for only experienced divers. The best season to explore the site is during the Northeast Monsoon.

Kandooma Thila ***

Definitely number one in the ranking of the best dive sites in South Male atoll. Long thila, located in the middle of the channel, offers spectacular conditions to observe grey reef sharks, whitetip reef sharks, eagle rays, big schools of jacks and snappers both with incoming and outgoing current. North side of the pinnacle is nicely covered with soft corals with the top of the reef being home to many reef fish and green turtles. Currents can be pretty strong so negative entry and fast descent is often required. Current hooks should be ready to use. Rasdhoo atoll

Guraidhoo Corner

Located south of Guraidhoo Island, this is a protected site hosting many pelagic species during incoming currents and presents several "washing machines", downstream currents. This site is thus only recommended for advanced divers with greater experience and should be avoided by those who are beginners. This site is a great spot to watch eagle rays, whitetip sharks, and gray reef sharks, and is especially interesting during Northeast Monsoon.

NORTH ARI ATOLL:

Rasdhoo Madivaru ***

Channel dive between Rasdhoo island and Madivaru offering a spectacular ridge facing the ocean to observe grey reef sharks, whitetip reef sharks, eagle rays and large dogtooth tunas. More pelagics are visible during strong incoming currents, the use of current hooks is advisable. The ridge dropping down to 50+ meters on the outside, expands to a sandy bottom inside the channel where it is common to see stingrays. If dived during the first rays of the sun, with incoming current and a bit of luck it is

possible to encounter hammerhead sharks. In this case the dive starts in the blue. Depending on the air consumption and no-deco time we continue the dive on the ridge and then drift into the channel.

Maaya Thila **

The thila (a pinnacle) is about 80 meters wide in diameter and is considered one of the best night dives in the Maldives. Top reef at 5 meters makes it easy to access even with strong currents. The upcurrent side is always very active and busy with fusiliers and snappers. Big jack fish, whitetip reef sharks, stingrays and moray eels can be spotted easily. Some overhangs around the thila provide shelter for turtles. Even though it has a reputation for a night dive it is also quite popular during the day. A few separated coral blocks south of the thila create a tunnel and are full of beautiful coral bushes. With the right current this is a place to spot grey reef sharks as well.

Maayafushi Lagoon or Fesdhoo Lagoon*

In both lagoons you have the unique chance to snorkel or dive with manta rays at night. To experience the fantastic and exciting adventure up close, a powerful spotlight is pointed at the water, attracting plankton. This plankton in turn attracts the manta rays.

Fish Head **

One of the major attractions of the atoll, cannot be missed. Due to its exposure to the currents it offers rich presence of fauna and flora. Big schools of jacks and fusiliers on the upcurrent side as well as difficult to count amount of blue striped snappers hiding from strong currents inside the overhangs all around the thila are the highlights of the place. It is also popular with grey reef sharks, schools of barracudas and dogtooth tunas in the blue as well as turtles and moray eels on the top reef. With strong currents negative entry is recommended and current hooks should be ready to use.

Bathalaamaagaa Kanthila ***

Long coral ridge in the middle of a channel, extended from the outer reef and sloping gradually down to 25 meters and deeper offering good conditions for observing grey reef sharks, whitetip reef sharks, eagle rays and napoleons as well as schools of jacks and fusiliers. The dive site is active during both incoming and outgoing currents but might be more challenging during outgoing currents of northeast monsoon. Negative entry required and divers are recommended to hide below the depth of the top reef to protect from the current. Current hooks strongly recommended.

SOUTH ARI ATOLL:

Moofushi Kanduu (Manta Point) **

Drift dive with a chance to spot manta rays hovering over the cleaning station at the depth of around 14 to 25 meters. If mantas are spotted it is recommended to use current hooks and stay around the cleaning station for a longer time. The dive site is quite popular during the northeast monsoon and sometimes might be overcrowded with divers. Whitetip reef sharks are common visitors around the deeper part of the cleaning station with blue striped snappers and fusiliers being permanent residents.

Kudarah Thila ***

The thila is a part of Marine Protected Area and is often considered the most beautiful site of the atoll with exceptional diving conditions. Overhangs rich in sea fans and the top reef nicely covered with healthy soft corals are the highlights. It is also known for big

schools of blue striped and midnight snappers, fusiliers and jacks. It is worth to have a torch and look inside small caves where often you will find big groupers hiding. The water entry might be challenging due to its exposure to strong currents and with the top reef at 15 meters negative entry is recommended. The use of current hooks might be required if the current is strong.

Maamigili Beyru ([Maldives Whale shark search](#)) *

Located on the southern tip of Ari atoll within the Marine Protected Area of South Ari atoll. Shallow and very easy dive which might turn into a very exciting one as it is known as the best location in the Maldives for spotting the biggest fish in the world. Whale sharks can be seen cruising along the reef all year round. Most of the boats look for them from the surface. Once spotted, divers enter the water, go down and start swimming along with them. The code of conduct for whale shark encounters must be followed and is always discussed during the briefing.

VAAVU ATOLL:

Miyaru Kandhu ***

One of the channel dives that you don't want to miss. With strong incoming current the list of possible encounters is impressive. Mainly grey reef sharks but also whitetip reef sharks, eagle rays, napoleons and tunas are quite common and with the visibility reaching 40 meters during the northeast monsoon it can be the highlight of the trip.

Outgoing current offer worse visibility but the sharks are still there. The site is not recommended for beginners, negative entry is often required and current hook is a must to avoid causing unnecessary damage to the reef. Most of the time you will spend at the depth of 26 to 30 meters so checking air and no-deco time more often is strongly recommended.

Alimatha House Reef **

Located on the south side of Alimatha island resort and considered one of the best night dives in the Maldives, being often a victim of its success and resulting in overcrowding of divers. Every night there is a show performed by a big number of nurse sharks, stingrays and massive jacks. Maximum depth will not exceed 15 meters and most of the time you will be kneeling on a sandy bottom waiting for the sharks to come closer. Definitely not to be missed.

EXAMPLES, DEPENDING ON CURRENTS AND WEATHER



