SCUBASPA YING

Far Far North: Dharavandhoo to Hanimaadhoo

Dharavandhoo to Hanimaadhoo | Baa, Lhaviyani, Noonu, Shaviyani, Haa Dhaal and Haa Alif

The far northern atolls of the Maldives are remote, raw and largely untouched by tourism.

The trip begins with the manta encounters of Hanifaru Bay, then drifts through Lhaviyani and Noonu, where channel dives pulse with grey reef sharks, eagle rays, turtles and barracuda, with overhangs, pinnacles and ridges alive with colour.

Further north, many dive sites are hardly ever visited, with manta cleaning stations, underwater caves and both species of guitar shark, the bowmouth and the shovelnose.

So few boats reach these waters that every dive feels like a first.

Ashore, quiet villages show another side of the Maldives, and Utheemu was once home to a legendary sultan.

LENGTH	DEPARTURE PORT	ARRIVAL PORT	EXPERIENCE
8 days / 7 nights	Dharavandhoo	Hanimaadhoo	No minimum level







Your itinerary

DAY 1

Baa Atoll

Hanifaru Bay

The start or the end of the route, with the seasonal manta gathering in the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.

DAY 2

Lhaviyani and Noonu

Channel dives

Channel dives with grey reef sharks, eagle rays, turtles and barracuda, in currents and over coral covered topography.

DAY 3

Shaviyani, Haa Dhaal and Haa Alif

Exploration

Remote atolls with largely unexplored sites, manta cleaning stations, caves and both species of guitar shark.

DAY 4

Island visits

Cultural stops in quiet villages, which may include Utheemu.

THE ROUTE

What the week holds

The Far Far North is an adventure through the farthest northern atolls of the Maldives, remote, raw and largely untouched by tourism. You begin, or end, in Baa Atoll with the manta encounters of Hanifaru Bay, then drift through Lhaviyani and Noonu, where channel dives pulse with grey reef sharks, eagle rays, turtles and barracuda, with overhangs, pinnacles and ridges alive with colour.

The week starts in Dharavandhoo and finishes in Hanimaadhoo, and needs two domestic flights, one between Male and Dharavandhoo and one between Male and Hanimaadhoo.

HANIFARU BAY

Manta rays in a biosphere reserve

Hanifaru Bay lies in Baa Atoll, a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, and in the south west monsoon it hosts the largest seasonal gathering of manta rays in the world, together with whale sharks. The yacht stays in the area for two days, in contact with the rangers who watch the bay by drone, and when the mantas arrive the dive dhoni takes guests into the bay for about an hour of guided snorkelling. Diving in the bay itself has been forbidden since 2012, so a snorkelling trip replaces one of the scheduled dives, and the surrounding reefs offer shallow manta cleaning stations for both divers and snorkellers, plus Dhonfanu Thila and Dharavandhoo Thila, undersea mountains covered in soft corals and macro life.

The itinerary is flexible so the yacht can maximise time with mantas and other pelagics, and the route is adapted to what is found.

THE ATOLLS

Baa, Raa, Noonu and Lhaviyani

- Baa Atoll: Hanifaru Bay in the manta season, with guided snorkelling timed to make the most of the sightings.
- Raa Atoll: 88 islands, 15 of them inhabited, with relaxed reef dives on small pinnacles packed with soft coral, schooling fish and macro life, and visits from turtles, eagle rays and mantas, plus plenty of sandbanks.
- Lhaviyani Atoll: channel dives with grey reef sharks, silvertips, eagle rays, blacktip sharks, turtles and schooling barracuda, at their best from August to October, plus turtle caves and Kuredu Express, named for its strong currents.
- Noonu Atoll: 71 islands, 13 of them inhabited, famous for swarming fish, spinner dolphins and soft corals, with deep pinnacle dives at Orimas Thila and Xmass Rock, a night dive at the Maafaru wreck with stingrays and perhaps guitar sharks, and a day on the picnic island of Dhifuraam.

FAR FAR NORTH

Beyond Noonu

Further north, in Shaviyani, Haa Dhaal and Haa Alif atolls, the sense of exploration grows. Many of the dive sites here have hardly been explored, with the chance of manta cleaning stations, underwater caves and both species of guitar shark, the bowmouth and the shovelnose. So few boats reach these waters that every dive feels like a discovery.

Between dives, local island visits show another side of the Maldives, with quiet villages, cultural encounters and centuries of history. Stops may include Utheemu, once home to a legendary sultan and a lasting symbol of Maldivian independence.

ABOVE THE WATER

Beaches, kayaks and a picnic island

The programme includes an island barbecue on a picnic island and daily trips to white sandbanks, with kayaks and paddleboards for gliding across the blues of the Indian Ocean, and in Noonu a fun tube too. Domestic flights are needed on these routes, and they are booked separately.

THE DIVING

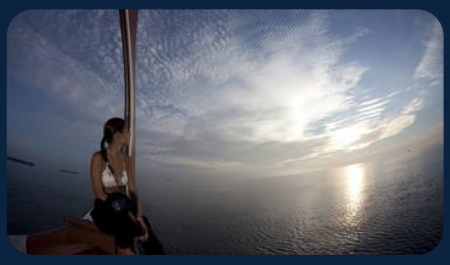
How the diving is organised

A separate 20 metre dive boat, a dhoni, goes with the yacht and carries the equipment and compressors, so the yacht stays quiet while you prepare. It has plenty of seating, several entry points, a stern platform, a sun deck and a toilet on board. The yacht is a PADI 5 Star Dive Resort, the instructors speak several languages, and courses run from introductory dives to certification, with children from ten years old able to learn.

Dives are limited to 30 metres. A dive computer is compulsory, diving alone and decompression dives are not allowed, and night dives and dives deeper than 18 metres are for advanced certified divers. You can upgrade your certification on board.







THE SPA

Treatments, yoga and calm

The Asian style spa covers 300 square metres over two decks, the largest on any liveaboard in the Maldives. There are four treatment rooms, including one for couples, a secluded deck for open air Thai massage and meditation, and a shaded lounge.

More than fourteen treatments are on the menu, including Swedish, Balinese, Thai, Filipino, Hilot, Shiatsu, Ayurvedic, Hawaiian, Lomi Lomi, warm bamboo, lava shell and hot stone massage, plus facials and Ayurvedic champissage for the hair. The products are made for the boat with organic ingredients, botanical extracts and essential oils, and you can buy them from the on board boutique.

Yoga runs every morning and at sunset on the open deck, with asanas, breathing and meditation for beginners and experienced practitioners alike.







ON THE TABLE

Food, drink and celebrations

Internationally trained chefs cook European, Mediterranean and Asian dishes with local flavours, served as three buffet meals a day with live cooking stations in the al fresco restaurant. The menu runs from the catch of the day, lamb and beef to a sushi bar, tapas and flaming crêpes Suzette, and fresh lobster can be ordered for a small extra charge. Dietary requirements are catered for.

The bar sits next to the restaurant and opens onto the shaded lounge deck, with wines, champagnes, cocktails, beers and spirits and a daily happy hour. Once a week the crew hosts a moonlit barbecue on a sandy beach.

The chefs will also plan birthdays, anniversaries, engagements and weddings, from a private dinner on a separate deck to champagne at sunset.







PACKAGES

Choose how you spend the week

Every guest chooses one of three packages for the week. The packages cannot be mixed, and dives cannot be swapped for treatments.

Scuba holiday

Up to 17 dives over the week. This package is for certified divers, and you can book extra spa treatments on board when there is space.

Spa holiday

Eight spa treatments in the week, plus yoga and snorkelling. A Discover Scuba Diving experience can be added if you would like to try diving.

Scuba and spa

Six dives and four spa treatments. This is also the package for the PADI Open Water course, which runs on the seven night cruises.

CONDITIONS

Seasons, water and sea life

The water stays between 26 and 29 degrees all year. From November to May the north east monsoon brings clear skies and little rain, with channel dives on the eastern sides of the atolls and mantas at the cleaning stations on the western sides. From June to October the south west monsoon brings fewer crowds, with mantas on the eastern sides and the channel dives on the western sides. Routes are adjusted to the monsoon, the weather and the tides.

Expect mantas, whale sharks, turtles, reef sharks, eagle rays, stingrays and big schools of tropical fish.

INCLUDED

What your trip covers

INCLUDED IN THE TRIP PRICE

- Cabin accommodation with three meals a day
- Welcome drink, drinking water, coffee and tea
- Airport transfers on the regular arrival and departure days
- Yoga classes every morning
- Snorkelling, with equipment included
- A barbecue on a deserted island and the excursions in the programme
- The diving or spa treatments of the package you choose
- Wi-Fi, with a 5 GB allowance per cabin

NOT INCLUDED

- International and domestic flights
- Service and administration charge and the nightly green tax, shown on our trip listings
- Dive and travel insurance
- Dive equipment rental
- Drinks from the bar and extra spa treatments
- Crew gratuities, which are optional