

# South & Central Atolls

*Sample Itinerary: 12-nights itinerary for scuba diving in the South and Central atolls of Maldives*

## Summary

This Itinerary takes you to the fantastic dive sites in the southern part of the Maldives. You will get to visit the best dive sites around the atolls of Huvadhoo, Laamu, Thaa, Meemu, Vaavu and South Male. A long overnight sail is also part of this itinerary.

## Recommendation on Diver's Qualifications

Please note that this itinerary will involve diving in currents. We recommend that our guests have:

- A minimum of 100 logged dives
- Nitrox certification
- Experience with diving in currents

## Disclaimer

We wish to show you the best diving possible; however, a number of factors determine which route the Cruise Director and Captain will choose and which dive sites we visit. Weather conditions, tides, currents and the number of other dive vessels at a particular site all play a part in where the boat is heading to. While we attempt to ensure the number of dives we have scheduled is fulfilled, bad weather can hinder the yacht's ability to reach a specific dive site in our scheduled time. The safety of all on board is paramount and we always do our best to offer diving at alternative sites, should we be unable to visit the sites listed below.

## A Typical Day

The diving day has a typical schedule as follows:

- 06:00 Wake-up call
- 06:30 - 07:00 Light breakfast followed by a briefing and Dive 1
- 08:30 Full breakfast , relaxation period
- 10:30 Briefing and Dive 2
- 12:30 Lunch, relaxation period
- 14:30 Briefing and Dive 3
- 16:00 Snack, relaxation period
- 19:00 Dinner (if we offer a sunset or night-dive, the schedule will be slightly amended)

The following is a description of some of the dive sites we may visit during your liveboard safari on board M/Y White Pearl.

## Day 1 - 5

### ***Huvadhu Atoll: Villingili and Nilhanhoo kandu***

Huvadhu Atoll is also known as Gaafu Atoll in the Maldives. Huvadhu splits more or less evenly between the inner lagoon and the outer reef. Thanks to its remote location, the atoll offers vast swathes of healthy reefs, populated by impressive table corals and staghorns, although soft corals such as sea fans can also be seen. Swirling schools of big-eye trevally are a common sight, as well as tuna, snapper, and oriental sweetlips, while several spots provide shelter for nesting sea turtles.

Whether you enjoy an exhilarating drift dive, a calm, easygoing exploration of a shallow reef, or looking for sharks in the channels – there is something for everyone. There's a wealth of exciting dive sites waiting to be explored in this area, including colourful coral reefs, outcrops, caves, tunnels, *thilas* (underwater islands) and fascinating channels.

The atoll is fringed by a well-defined and almost continuous rim-reef with a deep lagoon. It is a paradise for underwater adventures with scores of healthy coral islets and still undiscovered dive sites. Many of the vibrant reefs and lagoons remain unexplored, and visitors here include stingrays, eagle rays, a large number of turtles, and a variety of sharks, including black and white tip reef sharks, nurse sharks, spinner sharks, and occasionally, hammerheads and bull sharks.

**Villingili Kandu** and **Nilandhoo Kandu**, in the atoll's northeast, are two favourite sites for shark diving. And, as if that wasn't enough, between January and April, liveboards often stop in the atoll's northeast to snorkel with whale sharks. The vessels—including ours—shine large spotlights into the water at night, attracting large plumes of plankton towards the surface. In turn, the plankton lure whale sharks, right up to the boat to feed, allowing guests to slide in and swim alongside.

## Day 6

### ***Laamu Atoll: Fushi Kandu and Thaa Atoll and Olhugiri Kandu***

With only a few channels breaking the atoll's outer reef, the tidal flows in and out of the central lagoon can be intense - attracting plenty of marine life and ensuring great visibility. Beginners and photographers can explore the stunning coral reefs within the lagoon, while more advanced divers should head to the adrenaline-pumping drift diving to be had in the northern channels. The strong currents attract jaw-dropping pelagic action, including sharks and eagle rays. Inner reefs house plenty of small macro critters and an abundance of colourful tropical fish, as well as larger favourites like sea turtles.

**Fushi Kandu** is one of the most popular channel dives, although relatively shallow, it stretches for 250 metres/657 feet and white tip reef sharks are frequent visitors, as well as schools of jacks, tuna and eagle rays.

**Olhugiri Kandu** is Located in the atoll's northeast, Olhugiri Kandu is a pelagic-packed channel where schooling fish attract scores of whitetip reef sharks on the hunt, as well as jacks, tuna and eagle rays waiting for their fill.

## Day 7

### *Meemu Atoll: Muli Corner and Kurali Manta Point and Vanhuravalhi Kandhu*

The northeast is peppered with submerged pinnacles covered predominantly with soft corals, while the western part will see you surrounded by jacks and snappers. Keep an eye out for sharks and rays at 30 metres/98 feet!

**Muli Corner** is a haven for experienced divers seeking an exhilarating adventure. Swim through vibrant soft coral and awe-inspiring hard coral formations, home to an abundance of marine life including barracudas, jacks, and snappers, while watching out for grey reef sharks, white tip reef sharks, and eagle rays. With excellent visibility of 20-30 metres / 65-98 feet and strong currents, this dive site promises an unforgettable underwater experience. Don't miss the chance to explore the breathtaking **Muli Corner** and discover the magic of the Maldives' underwater world.

**Kuruli Manta Point** is a paradise for divers seeking an unforgettable encounter with the ocean's gentle giants. Glide alongside the majestic manta rays and watch in awe as they gracefully soar through the crystal-clear waters. Among the diverse coral formations, spot reef sharks, turtles, and vibrant schools of fish. With great visibility of up to 25 metres/82 feet and mild currents, this dive site is accessible to divers of all levels. Immerse yourself in the wonder of **Kuruli Manta Point** and experience the magic of the Maldives' underwater world.

## Day 8

### *Vaavu Atoll: Fotteyo Kandhu and Miyaru Kandhu and Alimathaa*

Even by Maldives' standards, Vaavu's channels are special, and **Fotteyo Kandhu** is considered one of the best dive sites in the Maldives. The narrow channel has swim-throughs, small caves and large overhangs to explore, as well as a drop-off covered in colourful soft corals. The occasional hammerhead is seen, but it is the schools of grey reef and whitetip sharks, large schools of trevally and other big species that brings in the divers.

Nearby **Miyaru Kandhu**, which translates to 'Shark Channel' certainly lives up to its name. A huge variety of marine life can be seen here, including tuna, large schools of grey reef sharks, whitetip reef sharks, tuna and Napoleon wrasse, as well as many colourful reef fish. Manta rays are also seen in the low season when the current is outflowing.

In recent years, a night dive at **Alimathaa jetty** has attracted a lot of attention with its large numbers of blacktip sharks, nurse sharks and whiptail rays. A popular dive site, we urge divers to be extremely conscious of their behaviour and surroundings, as it is very easy to kick or accidentally corner the sharks and rays.

## Day 9 - 12

### *South and North Male: Kandooma Thila and Guraidhoo Corner*

South Male Atoll is famous for its current-swept channels and provides guests with a wide variety of stunning diving no matter their skill level and experience. Known for its steep walls, ledges, and small caves, South Malé's underwater environment is famous for its variety of reef fish common to the Maldives, as well as plenty of macro life and several manta ray cleaning stations.

**Kandooma Thila** – often known as Cocoa Thila – is one of the most famous dive sites in the Maldives. Set within a wide channel, patrolled by grey reef sharks and chances are high that you will find

schooling eagle rays, turtles, and colourful reef fish covering the entire reef. **Guraidhoo Corner** is another beautiful site and the large marine protected area is home to a massive concentration of reef life, including sharks, schooling trevallies, rays, turtles and reef fish.