

Exploring the Maldives

Information and Guide to
Cultural Artifacts

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Quick Facts about the Maldives

Official Name:	Republic of Maldives
Capital City:	Male
Population:	389,568 (2023 est.)
Geographic Size:	298 sq km
Official Language:	Dhivehi
Religions:	Sunni Muslim
Main Crops:	Papayas, vegetables, roots/tubers, nuts, fruit, other meat, tomatoes, coconuts, bananas, maize
Money:	Rufiyaa (MVR)

Source: CIA: The World Factbook. "Maldives."

<https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/maldives/#economy>

Geography

The Maldives lies in two rows of atolls in the Indian Ocean, just across the equator. The country is made up of about 1,190 coral islands formed around 26 natural ring-like atolls, spread over 90,000 square kilometers. These atoll structures are formed upon a sharp ridge rising from the ocean, thereby creating their world-wide uniqueness.

Each atoll in the Maldives is made of a coral reef encircling a lagoon, with deep channels dividing the reef ring. A string of islands take their places among this atoll ring; each island has its own reef encircling the island lagoon. The reefs of the islands, alive with countless underwater creatures and vibrant corals, protect the islands from wind and the ocean waves. This unique structure of reefs and channels makes navigation almost impossible for anybody without sufficient local knowledge of the waters.

The islands stretch like a garland for 822km from 7 degrees north of the Equator to just south of it, with the greatest width from west to east being 130km. The territory embraces a total area of 90,000 sq km but that includes the sea, which forms 99.6% of the Maldives. The land area of all the islands amounts to 298 sq km.

The Maldives has no hills, but some islands have dunes which can reach 2.4 meters (7.9 feet) above sea level, like the NW coast of Hithadhoo (Seenu Atoll) in Addu Atoll. Islands are too small to have rivers, but small lakes and marshes can be found in some of them.

Source: About Maldives

<https://www.maldivesembassy.be/en/about-maldives/geography-location#:~:text=About%20Maldives&text=The%20country%20is%20made%20up,creating%20their%20world%2Dwide%20uniqueness.>

Flag of Maldives



Arabs from the Arabian Peninsula and East African coast have sailed and traded widely throughout the Indian Ocean for centuries. Many of their ships carried a plain red ensign, which served as the national flag of Oman, Zanzibar (now part of Tanzania), Kuwait, the Comoros, and several other Arab states or colonies. This flag, on the initiative of Prime Minister Amir Abdul Majeed Didi, was adopted by the Maldives, but in the 20th century it became increasingly necessary for countries to identify themselves clearly in the international arena. Therefore, at some unknown date (probably in the 1930s), the Maldives acquired a new flag. Many variations of the basic design were developed for special purposes such as use by the sultan, display on public buildings for official holidays, or use by the armed forces.

The new Maldivian national flag had a green panel with a white crescent, symbolic of the national religion, Islam, as well as of progress, prosperity, and peace. Its broad red border was a reminder of the traditional red flag and of heroes who sacrificed themselves for the nation. Along the hoist was a distinctive narrow vertical stripe composed of black and white diagonal stripes. The Maldives was a British protectorate from 1887 until July 26, 1965, when it regained its independence. At that time the hoist stripe was omitted, but the national flag otherwise stayed the same.

Source: flag of the Maldives

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/flag-of-the-Maldives>

Posters of Tourist Attractions in the Maldives

Sinamalé Bridge

The China Maldives Friendship Bridge or the Sinamale Bridge is a 2-kilometre long bridge connecting the capital city Male to the airport island of Hulhule and by extension, Hulhumale Island. The bridge was made as a part of the Belt and Road Initiative and is largely funded by China, strengthening the ties between both the nations.



Source: <https://www.holidify.com/places/maldives/chinamaldives-friendship-bridge-sightseeing-124827.html>

Tsunami Monument

The Tsunami Monument in Malé, Maldives, commemorates the victims of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, which caused significant loss of life and extensive damage in the country. Situated at the water's edge, the monument features steel balls representing the Maldives' 20 atolls, symbolizing the rising waters of the tsunami, with iron rods bearing the names of the victims. It serves as both a memorial and a serene spot for reflection, attracting visitors and surfers alike to its tranquil location in the southeast part of Malé.



Source: <https://www.alluringworld.com/tsunami-monument/>

Hukuru Miskiyy (Friday Mosque)

Hukuru Miskiyy, built in 1658 and the minaret adjacent to the mosque, built in 1675 are the oldest built structures in Male' today. In addition to being the most revered center of worship for many centuries, Hukuru Miskiyy is of great cultural and historical significance to the Maldives and stands witness to the skills of Maldivian craftsmen of the time.



Source: <https://visitmaldives.com/en/places/hukuru-miskiyy>

Jumhooree Maidhaan (Republic Square) Of Maldives

Jumhooree Maidhaan, known as Independence Square, is a bustling hub in the Maldives, cherished by locals and visitors alike. Constructed in 1989, it features lush grounds, a towering flagpole, and serves as a popular spot for social gatherings, political demonstrations, and recreation, embodying the nation's pride and identity.



Source: <https://www.themaldivestravel.com/jumhooree-maidhaan-republic-square-of-maldives-a-lovely-attraction.html>

Velana International Airport

Velana International Airport, also known as Malé-Velana International Airport, serves as the primary hub for international travel to the Maldives, facilitating vital connections with major airports worldwide. Strategically located on Hulhulé Island near the capital Malé, it plays a crucial role in supporting the Maldives' tourism industry.



Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Velana_International_Airport

Maafushi Island

Maafushi Island is one of the inhabited islands in the Maldives, located in the South Male Atoll. Maafushi also offers glimpses into Maldivian culture and local island life, with opportunities to visit the island's mosque, interact with locals, and sample Maldivian cuisine at restaurants and cafes.



Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maafushi_\(Kaafu_Atoll\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maafushi_(Kaafu_Atoll))

Muliaage

Muliaage is a historic building located in the capital city of Maldives, Male. Built in the early 20th century, it served as the official residence of Maldives' presidents. The architecture reflects a blend of traditional Maldivian design elements with colonial influences, and today it stands as a symbol of the country's rich history and cultural heritage.



Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muliaage>

History

The Maldives were inhabited as early as the 5th century BCE by Buddhist peoples, probably from Sri Lanka and southern India. According to tradition, Islam was adopted in 1153 CE. Ibn Baṭṭūṭah, a notable North African traveler, resided there during the mid-1340s and described conditions at that time, remarking disapprovingly on the freedom of the women—a feature that has been noticeable throughout Maldivian history.

The Portuguese forcibly established themselves in Male from 1558 until their expulsion in 1573. In the 17th century the islands were a sultanate under the protection of the Dutch rulers of Ceylon (Sri Lanka), and, after the British took possession of Ceylon in 1796, the islands became a British protectorate, a status formalized in 1887. In 1932, before which time most of the administrative powers rested with sultans or sultanas, the first democratic constitution was proclaimed, the country remaining a sultanate. A republic was proclaimed in 1953, but later that year the country reverted to a sultanate.

In 1965 the Maldivian Islands attained full political independence from the British, and in 1968 a new republic was inaugurated, and the sultanate abolished. The last British troops left on March 29, 1976; the date thereafter celebrated in the Maldives as Independence Day.

Source: “Maldives”

<https://www.britannica.com/place/Maldives>

Language

Dhivehi, also known as Maldivian, is the official and most widely spoken language of the Maldives, an island nation located in the Indian Ocean. It belongs to the Indo-Aryan language family and is closely related to Sinhala, the language spoken in neighboring Sri Lanka. Its linguistic journey traverses through various scripts, starting with the ancient Eveyla Akuru, which chronicled the reigns of kings in historical records. Subsequently, the Dhives Akuru script gained prominence, shaping written communication for generations. However, it is the Thaana script that prevails today, introduced during the reign of Mohamed Thakurufaanu.

Thaana Script: The Thaana script is the present-day script used to write Dhivehi. It is unique in that it is written from right to left, unlike the traditional left-to-right direction seen in many other scripts. Thaana is believed to have been introduced during the reign of Mohamed Thakurufaanu, a significant historical figure in the Maldives. The script consists of 24 letters, including vowels and consonants, and is used in modern-day writing, publications, and official documents.

Dhivehi language and its scripts reflect the cultural heritage and historical development of the Maldives. Despite influences from various cultures due to its strategic location in the Indian Ocean, Dhivehi has retained its distinct identity and continues to be an integral part of Maldivian society.

Source: Maldives Languages

[https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Maldives_Languages#:~:text=The%20official%20and%20common%20language,recording%20of%20kings%20\(raadhavalhi\)](https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Maldives_Languages#:~:text=The%20official%20and%20common%20language,recording%20of%20kings%20(raadhavalhi)).

Dhivehi Alphabet

ހ	ކ	ލ	ބ	ރ	ނ	ޝ	ހ
ހަލުފު	ކަލުފު	ލަވިޔަނި	ބާ	ރާ	ނޯނު	ޝަވިޔަނި	ހާ
alifu	kaafu	lhaviyani	baa	raa	noonu	shaviyani	haa
	k	lh	b	r	n	sh	h
∅	[k]	[l]	[b]	[r]	[n]	[ʃ]	[h]
ޖ	ގ	ލ	ތ	ޅ	ފ	މ	ވ
ޖަވިޔަނި	ގަލުފު	ލާލުމު	ތާ	ޅާލު	ފާލުފު	މީލުމު	ވާލު
gnaviyani	gaafu	laamu	thaa	dhaalu	faafu	meemu	vaavu
gn	g	l	th	dh	f	m	v
[ŋ]	[g]	[l]	[t]	[d]	[f]	[m]	[v]
ޝ	ޖ	ޕ	ޕ	ޓ	ޙ	ޔ	ސ
ޝަވިޔަނި	ޖަވިޔަނި	ޕަވިޔަނި	ޕާ	ޓަވިޔަނި	ޙަވިޔަނި	ޔަވިޔަނި	ސީނު
chaviyani	javiyani	paviyani	yaa	taviyani	zaviyani	daviyani	seenu
ch	j	p	y	t	z	d	s
[tʃ]	[dʒ]	[p]	[j]	[t]	[z]	[d]	[s]
Diacritics							
އ	އ	އ	އ	އ	އ	އ	އ
އަލުބެއްފިލި	އަލުބެއްފިލި	އަލުބެއްފިލި	އަލުބެއްފިލި	އަލުބެއްފިލި	އަލުބެއްފިލި	އަލުބެއްފިލި	އަލުބެއްފިލި
eybeyfili	ebefili	ooboofili	ubufili	eebeefili	ibifili	aabbaafili	abafili
ey	e	oo	u	ee	i	aa	a
[e:]	[e]	[u:]	[u]	[i:]	[i]	[a:]	[a]
				ނ	ސ	ޔ	ޔ
				ނަވިޔަނި	ސުކުނު	ޔަލުބެއްފިލި	ޔަލުބެއްފިލި
				ṇaviyani	sukun	oaboafili	obofili
				ṇ	'	oa	o
				[ṇ]	[ʔ]	[ɔ:]	[ɔ]

Source: "Maldivian" Omniglot: Writing Systems and Languages of the World.

<https://www.omniglot.com/writing/thaana.htm>

Dhivehi Alphabet Book

Dhivehi language books for kids make learning letters and numbers fun with colorful illustrations and simple explanations. These books often feature familiar objects and activities to help children grasp concepts easily. By introducing Dhivehi script and numerals in an engaging way, they lay a solid foundation for language and numerical skills. Such resources play a crucial role in fostering early literacy and numeracy among young learners in the Maldives.



Children's Books

These Dhivehi children's books feature simple stories and colorful illustrations that build young children's imagination. One book follows the journey of a whale as it explores the vast ocean, encountering various marine creatures along the way. In the second book, children are introduced to a family living in a house, when a tree unexpectedly falls on their kitchen.



Dhivehi Wildlife Card Game

Dhivehi Dhirun is a Maldivian kids card game that revolves around wildlife. Players collect sets of cards featuring different animals native to the Maldives, such as turtles, dolphins, and various marine creatures. The game involves strategic card selection and matching to form winning combinations, making it both educational and entertaining for children.



Indo-Pacific Fish Poster

The poster features vibrant images of Indo-Pacific fish alongside their respective names, creating an engaging and educational display. Each fish is accurately depicted, allowing viewers to learn about the diverse marine life found in the region while visually appreciating its beauty. This poster serves as both a decorative piece and a valuable educational tool.



Maldivian Currency (Rufiyaa)

Maldivian currency consists of colorful banknotes and coins used for buying goods and services. The currency of the Maldives is called the Maldivian Rufiyaa, often abbreviated as MVR. One Rufiyaa is divided into 100 laari. The banknotes come in various denominations, while coins are used for smaller amounts. The designs on the currency often showcase the natural beauty and cultural heritage of the Maldives, featuring marine life, traditional motifs, and historical landmarks.



Boat Model

A typical Maldivian boat model, known as a "dhoni," is characterized by its distinctive design featuring a graceful, curved prow and stern. These wooden vessels are traditionally handcrafted by skilled artisans using local materials like coconut timber. Dhonis serve various purposes in Maldivian culture, from fishing to transportation between the numerous islands, and their elegant yet sturdy construction reflects the seafaring heritage of the Maldivian people.



Coconut Water Vessel

A traditional Maldivian container crafted from the shell of a coconut features a natural and sustainable design. These containers are skillfully fashioned with a carrying strap made from coconut husk fiber, enhancing their functionality for transporting water. Widely utilized in daily life, these coconut shell containers reflect the resourcefulness and close relationship with nature inherent in Maldivian culture.



Maldives Postcards

These postcards from the Maldives beaches showcase pristine white sandy shores, crystal-clear turquoise waters, and lush green palm trees lining the coast. The images capture the serene beauty of the Maldivian archipelago, with vibrant coral reefs visible beneath the surface adding to the allure. These postcards offer a glimpse into the idyllic tropical paradise that the Maldives is renowned for.



Perfume Oil

The concentrated perfume oil from the Maldives comes in a convenient roll-on bottle, making it easy to apply and perfect for on-the-go use. Encased in a sleek and compact container, the roll-on bottle ensures that the fragrance remains secure and accessible whenever needed. Its portable design allows individuals to carry the essence of the Maldives with them.



Wooden Game Set

The wooden tic-tac-toe set from the Maldives is a classic game that involves two players taking turns to place their pieces on a grid. The grid consists of three vertical columns and three horizontal rows, creating nine spaces in total. The pieces in this set are of two different colors, typically representing the two players. The objective of the game is for a player to be the first to place three of their pieces in a horizontal, vertical, or diagonal row. Players must strategically place their pieces to block their opponent from forming a row while aiming to create their own winning sequence.



Coconut Ladle

The ladle, made from coconut in the Maldives, features a long handle and a deep, rounded bowl. Crafted with precision, it exhibits a smooth texture and natural color, typical of coconut shell products. This kitchen utensil reflects traditional craftsmanship and serves as a practical tool for scooping liquids and foods.



Lacquerwork Box

Locally known as Liye Laajehun, lacquer work is used to display the artistry of local craftsmen. In the Maldives, lacquer work is done by hand on wood, typically on vases or boxes. The boxes are then rubbed with yellow, red, and black resin and carved with a sharp knife. Baa Atoll, Thulhaadhoo Island is the most famous island for lacquer work in the Maldives.



Maldivian Drum

This drum is a small, handheld instrument, typically crafted from local materials such as wood and animal skin. Despite their compact size, they produce a rich and resonant sound, reflecting the musical traditions of the Maldives. These drums are commonly used in traditional performances and cultural ceremonies, serving as rhythmic



Shells and Sand

Shells and sand from the Maldives are renowned for their pristine beauty and fine texture. The sand, with its soft and powdery consistency, boasts a white color. Along the shores, a myriad of shells can be found, ranging from delicate cowries to intricate conch shells.



Clothing

Traditional Hat

This traditional Maldivian hat for women is a red headpiece adorned with gem stickers. Its vibrant color and embellishments add flair to the wearer's outfit, while its simple design reflects cultural tradition. This hat is commonly worn as part of traditional attire in the Maldives, serving both functional and decorative purposes.



Gold Necklace (Fahtaru)

Fahtaru is a long, traditional gold necklace from the Maldives, featuring intricate designs and craftsmanship. It is often adorned with geometric patterns or floral motifs, symbolizing elegance and cultural heritage. Worn by women during special occasions, Fahtaru adds a touch of beauty and tradition to their attire.

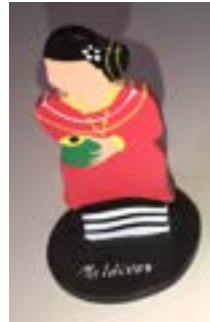


Traditional Women's Clothing

It is the customary Maldivian dress worn by women and is distinctive in showcasing the island's remarkable embroidery techniques named Kasabu Viyun. The embroidery surrounds the neckline and sometimes the borders of the dress. They are most pleasing when threaded onto colourful fabrics. This type of embroidery is made from silver and gold and pasted as patches of fabric in to the outfit.

This traditional dress can be widely seen worn by women in the inhabited islands, as well as the capital, Male. The outfit is worn along with an undergarment called feyli. Feyli is usually a dark blue or black skirt with a border of various kinds of stripes at its base. Nowadays, the authentic black lines are replaced with silver or gold to fit nicely with the dress.

The dress is also worn during formal events and dance recitals. However, the Dhivehi Libaas can be difficult to buy as one might have to order a custom-made outfit, or rarely you may encounter them in souvenir shops in the Maldives.



Source Traditional Dresses of Maldives
<https://pushpitha.livejournal.com/881888.html>

Traditional Men's Clothing

Compared to women's clothing, men's clothing in the Maldives is much simpler. In terms of style and fabric, there aren't many choices.

In the past, local men wore a piece of cloth wrapped around their waist – quite similar to sarongs. It's still worn during special occasions like Bodu Beru performance. This sarong-like clothing item is often worn with a simple shirt called Fosha – the shirt can be short-sleeved or long-sleeved.



Source Traditional Dresses of Maldives
<https://pushpitha.livejournal.com/881888.html>

Maldivian Footwear

Maldivian sandals, or flip flops, are crafted from woven materials, providing comfort and durability for everyday wear. Their simple yet practical design features a sturdy sole and a thong strap that comfortably secures the foot.



Cuisine

Experiencing the food of the Maldives is a culinary journey into the country's rich history. Maldivian cuisine is a delightful and tasty blend of South Indian, Sri Lankan, Arab, and Indonesian culinary traditions. This unique blend creates a tapestry of flavours and textures that are as unique as the islands themselves.

Indian traders introduced a treasure trove of spices, including cumin and cardamom, which have since become essential ingredients in the food of Maldives. These aromatic spices added depth and complexity to the local cuisine, creating a symphony of flavours.

The Arabian influence brought herbs and marinating techniques, enhancing the aromatic quality of Maldivian dishes. Herbs like curry leaves and methods of marinating meats and seafood are part of this culinary legacy.

Southeast Asian traders contributed significantly by introducing the art of coconut-based cooking. Coconuts, known locally as "kurumba," provide coconut milk, oil, and grated coconut, essential components in Maldivian recipes. This infusion of coconut goodness lends creaminess and aroma to a wide range of dishes.

With an abundance of marine life, seafood naturally became a cornerstone of Maldivian cuisine. Fish and tuna, in particular, are prepared in various ways, from grilling to currying, showcasing the versatility of Maldivian culinary traditions.

What makes Maldivian food truly exceptional is the harmonious fusion of these international influences with local cooking techniques and ingredients. Every bite tells the story of the Maldives as a crossroads of global trade, where diverse culinary elements have come together to create a unique and utterly delicious cuisine that continues to enchant taste buds worldwide.

Source: "Food of Maldives: A Dive into Maldivian Cuisine"

<https://www.acko.com/travel-tips/food-of-maldives/>

Popular Maldivian Food Posters

Kavaabu

Kavaabu is a popular snack in the Maldives, typically enjoyed as a quick bite or alongside a meal. It consists of small, bite-sized fritters made from a mixture of finely chopped vegetables, typically cabbage, carrots, onions, and sometimes green chilies, mixed with flour or chickpea flour, and seasoned with spices such as turmeric, cumin, and chili powder. The mixture is then shaped into small balls or patties and deep-fried until golden brown and crispy. Kavaabu is known for its crunchy texture



Banbukeyo Riha (Breadfruit Curry)

Banbukeyo Riha, also known as Breadfruit Curry, is a traditional Maldivian dish made from breadfruit, locally known as "banbukeyo" in Dhivehi. The breadfruit is typically cooked in a flavorful curry sauce made with coconut milk, onions, garlic, ginger, and a blend of spices such as curry leaves, turmeric, and chili powder.



Roshi

Maldivian roshi is a type of flatbread that is a staple food in the Maldives. It is similar to Indian roti or Sri Lankan roti. Roshi is typically served alongside various dishes, such as curries, fish, or vegetable dishes. It can also be eaten on its own or used to wrap around other foods as a type of bread. It is appreciated for its simplicity, versatility, and delicious taste, making it a beloved part of Maldivian cuisine.



Maskuroolhi

Maskuroolhi is a traditional Maldivian dish made primarily from smoked fish, coconut, and rice. Maskuroolhi is known for its rich and savory flavor, with the smokiness of the fish complementing the sweetness of the coconut and the spices adding depth and complexity to the dish. It is commonly enjoyed as a snack or appetizer.



Kadhuru Cake

Kadhuru Cake is a traditional dessert originating from the Maldives. It is a sweet and dense cake made primarily from grated coconut, sugar, and flour. Kadhuru cake is often enjoyed as a treat during special occasions or festivals in the Maldives, showcasing the country's unique culinary traditions.



Fish Masala

Fish masala powder from the Maldives is a vibrant blend of aromatic spices, specially crafted to enhance the flavor of seafood dishes. This unique seasoning typically includes a mix of coriander, cumin, turmeric, fenugreek, and other savory spices, offering a perfect balance of heat and depth of flavor.



Source: Food of Maldives: A Dive into Maldivian Cuisine
<https://www.acko.com/travel-tips/food-of-maldives/#musttry-maldivian-dishes>

Source: Five unmissable dishes that define the Maldives
<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/article/paid-content-maldives-best-food-dishes>

Quick Artifact Reference

1.Flag of Maldives



2.Sinamalé Bridge



3.Tsunami Monument



4.Hukuru Miskiiy



5.Jumhooree Maidhaan (Republic Square) Of Maldives



6.Velana International Airport



7.Maafushi Island



8.Muliaage



9.Dhivehi Alphabet Books



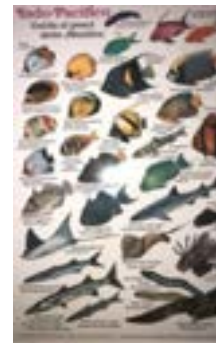
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18. Wooden Game Set



19. Coconut Ladle



20. Lacquerwork Box



21. Maldivian Drum



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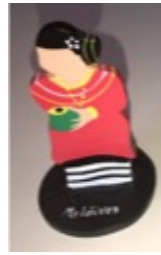
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24. Gold Fahtaru



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