

DOWN UNDER

General Info

The richness of biological diversity of the Maldives, among species, within species and between ecosystems, is striking. This is particularly true of marine biodiversity. Hundreds of species of multicolored tropical fish, in all sizes and shapes, along with an abundance of corals and shells live in the sea and near the reef surrounding every island and reef formation.

Marine Biodiversity Resources

In the Maldives, marine biological diversity exhibits outstanding richness. Indeed, the marine biodiversity of the archipelago is among the richest in the entire region, and the Maldives' has been recognized as having one of the world's most diverse marine ecosystems.

The Maldivian reefs have been described as bursting with a variety of lesser creatures whose sheer numbers defy description. More than 250 different species of hermatypic corals exist, belonging to 41 genera from the north and 55 from the south. Over 1200 reef fish species have been recorded. As many as 5000 different shell species, 100–200 sponge species, more than 1000 species of marine crustaceans and over 100 species of echinoderms exist.

A large range of different types of marine algae have also been documented. In addition, a variety of sharks, eels, rays, dolphins, whales and aquarium fish are commonly observed throughout the archipelago. Five species of endangered turtles, namely loggerhead turtles, green turtles, hawksbill turtles, olive ridley turtles and leatherback turtles, are also known to live in Maldivian waters.

Fish Species

A recent research study, carried out by the Marine Research Section (MRS) of the Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture, has documented economically important fish species in the Maldives. Some 900 species have been identified, nearly 300 of which were completely new records for the Maldives, and 7 of which had never before been recorded anywhere in the world. A second study records some 899 species of pelagic and shore fish, including 201 records new to the Maldives.

Fishing for reef fish has gained popularity in recent years with the increase in tourism, and new markets have been found on the resort islands and in Male'. In previous times, reef fish were only harvested when tuna was in scarce supply. Now, 45 species of reef fish are commercially important and salted and sun-fried reef fish are exported. Shark fishing, traditionally important to Maldivian, provides another source of export revenues.

The concept of *in situ* conservation is fairly new to the Maldives. Marine Protected Areas were demarcated for the first time in 1995. Although uninhabited islands and their reefs have been protected, protection has tended to result from limited resource extraction, as opposed to any concerted efforts at protection. *Ex situ* conservation methods do not exist. For instance, there are no aquariums, zoological or botanical gardens, or sacred gardens (land protected for religious uses).

The main types of *in situ* conservation methods employed in the Maldives include:

- marine protected areas;
- uninhabited islands;
- resort islands (only 20% of land is used and the remaining 80% is left as wilderness);
- agricultural islands where wilderness areas have been demarcated; and
- Areas protected by taboos (e.g. presence of *jinni*).

Some research and management programs aimed at strengthening the future management of biodiversity in the Maldives are currently being implemented. These include:

- Integrated Coastal Zone Management and Land Use Plan;
- Assessment of Marine Biodiversity;
- Protection of Marine Ecosystems along the Maldives Coast for Sustainable Development, supported by Global Environment Facility (GEF);
- Initiation of Protected Areas System;
- Assessment of Coral Damage on Tourist Islands.

Marine Protected Areas

A recent but important development in conservation has been the designation of 14 Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in the Maldives' central atolls, covering an area of approximately 12.55 sq. km. These areas have been identified for protection because of their outstanding diversity of corals, reef fish, sharks, rays and eels, as well as the existence of other organisms ranging from sponges and mollusks to bivalves. As protected areas, all extractive and human activities, including coral and sand mining, fishing, collecting, netting and anchoring are banned, with the exception of bait fishing.

Catching bait fish is permitted in MPAs given its importance for local tuna fishing; however, the methods used for bait fishing in MPAs must not damage or harm any living organism.

The location of Marine Protected Areas is illustrated below, while Table I identifies the key species found in these areas. The Government of the Maldives is currently examining options to extend marine protected area status to cover other parts of the archipelago. In addition, opportunities to establish terrestrial protected areas are being considered and some national parks may be designated in the near future. A number of potential sites have already been identified, including islands, wetlands, natural heritage sites and other habitats of significant importance. Some of these sites have diverse birds' populations, while others are uninhabited islands that serve as rookeries for sea turtles. These include Kottey and the lake in Addu Atoll, parts of Gan, as well as the lakes in Fuahmulah, and the Hithaadhoo Island of the Gaaf Alif Atoll.

Map I. Marine Protected Areas in the Maldives

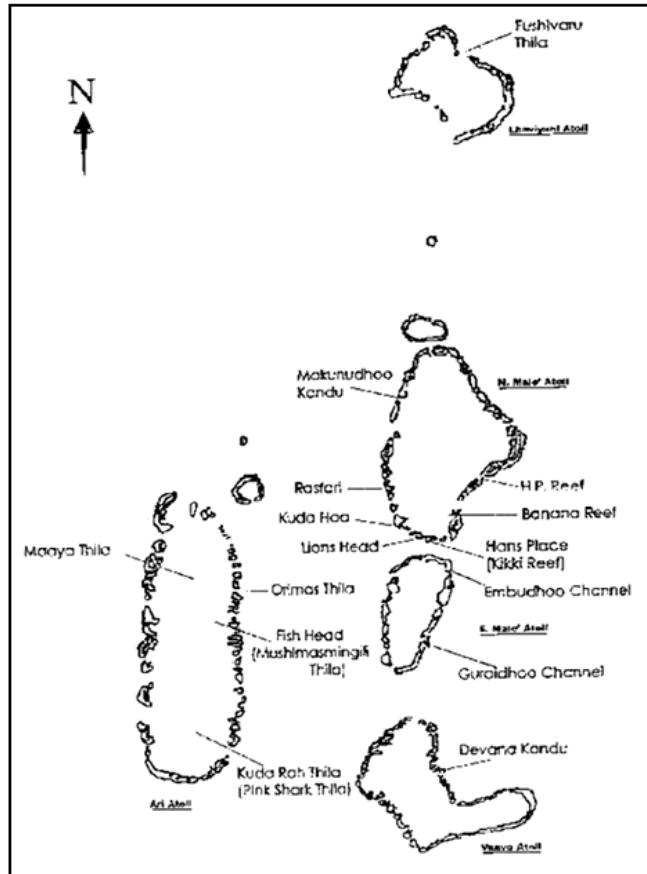


Table I. Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in the Maldives

Protected Area	Size	Key Species
North Male' Atoll		
Makunudhoo Kandu	100×2 000m	Coral, reef fish, shark
H.P Reef	100m radius	Soft coral, gorgonians, reef and pelagic fish
Banana Reef	100m radius	Fish, coral
Kuda Haa	100m radius	Coral, fish, stone fish
Lions Head	500m radius	Shark
Hans Hass Place	500m radius	Coral, caves, reef fish
South Male' Atoll		
Embudhoo Kandu	entire channel	Shark and pelagic fish
Guraidhoo Kandu	entire channel	Coral, shark, reef and pelagic fish
Ari Atoll (Fesdu island is in south male atoll)		
Maya Thila	500m radius	Fish, shark, manta rays
Orimas Thila	100m radius	Coral, soft coral, reef fish
Fish Head	500m radius	Shark
Kudarah Thila	100m radius	Corals, reef fish, shark
Felidhoo Atoll		
Devana Kandu	entire channel	Soft coral, fish, gray reef shark
Faadhipholhu Atoll		
Fushifaru Thila	100m radius	Superb hard coral, reef fish, pelagic fish,

Protection for Species

Under the Fisheries Law several species have been identified to receive protection against exploitation, trade and/or export as illustrated below. In addition, harvesting giant clams, black coral and pearl oysters from the wild has been banned, and the collection of sea cucumbers is now restricted.

Species banned from export:	Species banned from exploitation, kill or catch of any kind:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Black coral ▪ Pearl oyster ▪ Trochus shell ▪ Storny coral ▪ Eel ▪ Triton shell ▪ Bait fish ▪ Bigeye scad ▪ Parrot fish ▪ Sea turtle ▪ Puffer fish ▪ Dolphin ▪ Whale ▪ Rays 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Loggerhead turtle ▪ Green turtle ▪ Hawksbill turtle ▪ Olive Ridley turtle ▪ Leatherback turtle ▪ Dolphin ▪ Black coral ▪ Whale ▪ Whale shark ▪ Spiny lobster ▪ Triton shell ▪ Giant clam ▪ Napoleon wrasse

DOWN UNDER

The sites

- **Some of world's best dive sites right on our doorstep.**
 - Maaya Thila, Fishhead, Malhoss Thila, Himendhoo Thila, to name just a few
 - Breathtaking house reef & own Fesdu house wreck

Equipment

- **Fully equipped with latest state of the art equipment.**
 - Bauer B-trox Nitrox compressor, the best and first of it's kind in the Maldives
 - Latest top quality Scubapro diving gear; dolphin re-breathers
 - Cool underwater scooters; top quality underwater photo equipment rental

Courses

- **Full range of PADI courses.**
 - Open Water; Advanced Open Water; Rescue Diver, Divemaster.
 - Specialty courses such as wreck, shark, nitrox, manta ray awareness, underwater photography, DPV (diver propulsion vehicle)

Signature programs

- **DOWN UNDER Signature programs.**
 - 'I went under with DOWN UNDER' certificate (Discover Scuba Diving)
 - W underwater video; star in your own underwater movie
 - Wrexplorer two tank wreck dive, at Fesdu & Halaveli wrecks
 - Stealth diver; with the silent dolphin re-breather to get just that little bit closer to the action
 - Hammerhead heaven, overnight trip on our own two mast luxury yacht "ESCAPE" to world famous Hammerhead Shark Point

Boats

- **Customized dive boat.**
 - (W)UNDER dive limousine, super comfy with 'après dive' facilities
 - Sundeck
 - Post dive dry relax area

Safety

- **Specialized dive medical centre.**
 - Professional staffed centre with decompression chamber within 10min distance

Eco diving

- **W Marine biology station.**
 - Guest educational programs, presentations, guided trips, etc.
 - Sea watching adventures with the W resident marine biologist.

Languages Spoken

- English, Dutch, French, Italian, Spanish, Japanese, Russian, German, Dhivehi.

PRICELIST

All prices are in US\$ and subject to 10% service charge and 3.5% GST.
Please note boat fees are not included in dives, packages or course prices.
Dive prices include only 10L tank and weights.

DIVING:

Single Dive	65
5 - 9 Dives per dive	60
10 or more Dives per dive	55

“(W)UNDER” DIVE BOAT FEE:

Per dive	20
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EQUIPMENT RENTAL – per dive

ALL (BCD, Reg.set, Computer & Wetsuit)	25
One item (BCD/Reg.set/Computer/Wetsuit)	9
Night Dive supplement	10
Torch (including back-up)	10
Nitrox fill (12 liter cylinder)	8
15 liter tank	8
Digital Camera with CD burn	75
Seadoo Rental	90
Rebreather	100
Under Water Video – one dive	300
Under Water Video – two dive	400

This price list is valid from November 1st, 2010. All prices are in US\$ and are subject to change without prior notice by DOWN UNDER.

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All course rates below are for min. 2 participants.

BEGINNER COURSES (Including all equipment and certification*)

Discover Scuba Diving	170
Scuba Review	170
Repeat Discover Scuba Diving	130
Open Water Diver (PADI)*	750
Scuba Diver (PADI)*	500
Referral/Upgrade (PADI)*	500

ADVANCED COURSES: (Including tanks & weights and certification)

Adventure Diver	400
Advanced Open Water	600
Rescue Diver	750
Emergency First Response	250
Divemaster	1200
Nitrox course PADI	300 Nitrox for free after the course!
Nitrox course PRO NRC	200 Nitrox for free after the course!
Rebreather Course	900
DPV Specialty course (with Seadoo 2 dives)	370
Digital Underwater Photography Specialty	450 includes 2 rentals & CD burn
Shark Specialty	350
Manta Ray Awareness Specialty	350
Private guide (per dive)	250

Private courses and private boat rental are available upon request.
Please ask for details at DOWN UNDER.

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For any information
Please contact

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