

MALEDIVES - LAST PARADISE ON EARTH?



For tourists who love crystal clear blue waters and endless skies above, white sandy beaches and magical sunsets, the Maldives are the ideal place to go. Located south of India's Lakshadweep islands the Maldives lay on 26 separate coral atolls. Out of the surprising

1, 196 islands only 200 hundred are inhabited. They are an almost dreamlike destination where visitors get the chance to enjoy the pure beauty of the environment and relax in the sun.

The Maldivian Islands have a long and rather complicated history. To an originally Buddhist nation, Islam was later introduced in 1153. In the following centuries, the Maldives were controlled by the Portuguese (1558), Dutch (1654) and eventually British (1887). In 1965, the Maldives gained their independence, and shortly after the sultanate was replaced by a republic.

The islands have always been a very popular destination for sailors and traders from all over the world, and even today the visitors may perceive the multicultural character of the place. Tourism is a key aspect of local economy as today; it is the country's biggest exchange earner. Tourists simply love the idea of spending their holiday in 'the last paradise on earth' as local agents proudly call their home. The pristine waters offer diverse opportunities for scuba divers who come to admire the extraordinary reefs and the diverse marine life; snorkeling and surfing are also very popular here. Fishing enthusiasts will be happy to know that this destination is a true fishing heaven. There are no restrictions and the opportunities are nearly endless.

Tourists interested in visiting the Maldives should bear in mind that the islands are - from the financial point of view - quite demanding. The best time to visit is between December and April as the humidity is not too overbearing and the skies remain clear most of the time. Once on the islands travelers may enjoy the traditional music and dance performances which are reminders of the original Dhivehi culture.

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