Maldives tourism bulletin

Highlights  Conversations  Updates

GOLDEN YEAR - TOURISM 2022

MINISTRY OF TOURISM
REPUBLIC OF MALDIVES

February 2022
EDITORIAL

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DID YOU KNOW?

The first tourist resort opened in the Maldives was Kurumba Village (Kurumba Maldives) at Kaafu Atoll Vihamanafushi on 3rd October 1972 with 60 beds.
Golden Year Events Scheduled for February 2022

As we face the festivities of Golden Year of tourism in the Maldives, various celebratory activities are being planned and organized. A calendar of events has been formalized. The Tourism Golden Year calendar of events consists of official events organized by the Ministry of Tourism and plug in events by tourism sector associations, institutions and other stakeholders and partner agencies which are endorsed as Golden Year events by Ministry of Tourism. Below is a snapshot of events scheduled and confirmed for February 2022.

Savaadheetha Dhathuru
Date: 3rd February
Event Type: Plug-in event
Organizer: Maldives Integrated Tourism Development Corporation (MITDC)
Sailors from all across the globe to participate in a journey across the Maldives seas, making stops at local islands, exploring the culture, heritage, experiencing famous dive sites, sandbanks etc. The rally begins from the northernmost atoll of the country, Haa Alif Atoll, taking a course of 2 weeks, to reach Baa Atoll and will visit a total of 13 islands.

Golden Year Commemorating Stamp Set Release
Date: 16th February
Event Type: Official event
Organizer: Ministry of Tourism in association with Maldives Post Limited
The Golden Year Commemorating stamp set is scheduled to be launched by Mr. George Corbin, who is known in the history books of Maldives as one of the architects behind inception of tourism in the Maldives. This special stamp set by Maldives Post Limited consists of total 6 stamps. One of the stamps will be dedicated to the Golden Year logo and the remaining stamps each will represent a milestone in the 50-year journey of Maldives’ tourism development.

Raalhu Gudi - Kiteboarding Competition
Date: 5th-10th February
Event Type: Plug-in event
Organizer: Maafushi Dive Center and Slowtide
Raalhugudi was introduced in Maldives in 2016 when the two-time World Champion Yuri Zoon held his kite camp. Raalhu Gudi Kite Fest in Maafushi island. Raalhugudi aims to promote kiteboarding to Maldivians, youths as well as athletes and create local talent to represent Maldives on an international level. The 2022 competition will be joined Pro Kiteboarder Yuri Zoon.

Ocean 650
Date: 25th-27th February
Event Type: Plug-in event
Organizer: Mr. Shafraz Naeem in association with Unix Sporting
To mark the 50th Anniversary of the Tourism and Diving Industry of the Maldives, Shafraz Naeem, a technical diver from Maldives will be attempting to spend 50hrs underwater. Ocean 650 aims to raise awareness and advocate for a sustainable solution to tackle the issues of plastic pollution and the conservation of marine species and ecosystems in the Maldives.

Tourism Upbeat: The Pioneers Talk
Date: 17th February
Event Type: Official event
Organizer: Ministry of Tourism
The “Tourism Upbeat: The Pioneers Talk” is the first session of an interactive talk series designed by Ministry of Tourism with an objective to get insights and knowledge from the experts and professionals from tourism industry of Maldives. The first session of this series is dedicated to the pioneers of Maldives tourism. Mr. MU Manik, Mr. Hussain Atee, Mr Ahmed Naseem and Mr. George Corbin, who will share their experience and insights on the 50-year journey of Maldives tourism. The session will be held in hybrid format and hospitality and travel & tourism students from all schools and universities of Maldives are invited to join this knowledge sharing session.
George Corbin
The First Italian Tour Operator to the Maldives and Maldives Tourism Pioneer
Mr. George Corbin, a diving tour operator from Italy, visited the Maldives Embassy in Colombo in early 1972. He met Mr. Ahmed Naseem at the Embassy, who was also a travel enthusiast and arrived in the Maldives on a cargo ship. He spent his first visit to the Maldives snorkeling around the islands, enjoying the beautiful underwater scenario of the reefs. They came up with the idea of building a resort island and joined hands with Mr. Mohamed Umar Manik and Hussain Afeef. They built the very first resort of the Maldives, Kurumba Village now known as Kurumba Maldives, at Vihamanafushi Island in Male’ Atoll. Mr. Corbin organized and brought the first group of tourists, a team of 22 Italians, to the Maldives and stayed at Kurumba Village. This laid the foundation of Maldives tourism.

Fifty years ago, in 1972, your first visit to the Maldives, which was then an unknown island nation in the midst of the Indian Ocean, marks the humble beginning of tourism here in the Maldives. How did you come to know about the Maldives? What inspired you to decide to come? Tell us about your experience.

In the 60’s I started organizing diving tours (the underwater world has always been in me, a great passion). One day checking a world map and looking for new destinations for my diving clients my eyes fell on a group of islands in the middle of the Indian Ocean by the name of Maldive Islands. In those days there was no way to get any info on those Islands, so I decided to get on a plane and fly to the closest country, which was Ceylon, in those days. I have always been a man of action and never thought twice on a decision. I arrived at Colombo and checked in a hotel. I immediately inquired about the possibility of a Maldivian Embassy. I visited the Embassy and I started inquiring when a gentleman approached me and asked me about my desire to visit the Maldives. A great honorable person by the name of Ahmed Naseem. The next day we were both on our way to the Maldives on board a cargo ship.

On our arrival to Male and entering the Port I immediately realized that I was in Paradise, I could see islands all around and the beautiful barrier reef protecting the islands. I was in Paradise.

You played a significant role in the opening of the first tourist resort of the Maldives, Kurumba Village back in 1972 and bringing its first group of tourists to the resort. What were the biggest challenges you and your team faced, from opening the resort to convincing the tourists to come and then arranging the trip?

After spending a couple of weeks visiting Islands and snorkeling around, Naseem and
I sat down and decided to join forces and start and go ahead with our dream...build the first Resort and receive tourists. Naseem, joined by Maniku and Afeef on one side and me on the 50/50. We immediately took off and in 1972 received the first group of tourists to ever visit these Islands. Great success, and I can proudly say that we did a great job...flights, accommodation, food and diving all went as planned and the guests left very happy and that was the beginning of tourism in the Maldives. Naseem turned to be a great friend and host and made everything work for the best.

Over the 50 years of its journey, tourism in the Maldives has evolved significantly. From an economy that depended heavily on fishing, Maldives has positioned itself as the world's leading tourist destination, with the tourism sector now driving the economy, contributing over 40% to its GDP. What is your view on Maldives tourism today? Would you say the Maldives is on the right track in terms of sustainability?

Today Maldives is among the very first World destinations and I can only say that the Maldivians in general have done a great work and I’m very proud and happy for them. What makes the Maldives a great destination is not only the beauty of the Islands but also the people, humble, respectful and friendly.

I can only say that the potential is there and it will get much better. There are issues that have to be resolved and that will be my treated with the travel associations and the tourism sector.

The global travel industry is being challenged by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. As a travel enthusiast, what changes do you foresee in the travel industry due to this pandemic?

The pandemic is on its way out and the near future looks bright. We have to be positive and just put all our efforts in the future.

What makes the Maldives a great destination is not only the beauty of the Islands but also the people, humble, respectful and friendly.

When was your last visit to the Maldives? What changes were you most happy to see here? And what is the best thing about the Maldives that remained unchanged?

My last visit to Maldives was in 2018, for the inauguration ceremony of H.E. Mr. Ibrahim Mohamed Solih as the President of Maldives. The best thing about the Maldives is the kindness of its people. There are many beautiful countries around the world but unfortunately some of them are not doing that great and the beaches are full of unfriendly people. Inside me I can truly say that I feel part of the Maldives.

What has been your most memorable Maldivian experience?

My most memorable experience was the day I arrived in Male with my dear friend Naseem. No cars or motorcycles, just a few bicycles the streets with sand and no tar now Male is a big city and known worldwide.

What advice would you offer to the tourism industry stakeholders of the Maldives, both public and the private sector?

I firmly believe that there is still more to do. Maldives is not only for Honeymooners.
Moosa Didi
Chief Executive Officer / Managing Director
South Palm Resort Maldives

“My biggest strength is leading and achieving targeted goals.”
Moosa Didi is an experienced international hospitality management specialist, with strong leadership abilities and global experience, working in the tourism sector of the Maldives since 1983. Over the 38 years of his hospitality journey, he filled positions such as Front office Manager, Executive Chef, Operation Manager, Resort Manager, and General Manager of various globally known properties in the Maldives. With the experience gained from the industry, Moosa joined the resort development project in the Southernmost atoll of Maldives and materialized South Palm Resort in Addu City. He is currently the Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director of South Palm Resort Maldives Pvt. Ltd.

You have joined the industry 38 years back? Back then, how was the tourism industry like?
Tourism in the Maldives began in 1972, and I began working in the industry 10 years later. We were researching ways to exploit the beautiful beauty of the Maldives to attract more customers while we were young in the industry. But in the past decade, the business and its young brains and entrepreneurs have changed dramatically. We are not exploring but achieving.

What lead you to become a hotelier? How did you climb up to be the CEO of South Palm Resort Maldives Pvt. Ltd?
I was initially distracted by my football career but eventually realized that the best thing to do in the Maldives is to be a part of what Maldivians are good at, which is hospitality. Unlike others, we Maldivians are naturally humble people who are the best at providing such hospitality service. Climbing to where I am today is not an easy task. I had to sacrifice a lot, and there have been many sleepless nights where I used my free time to study and learn what needed to be done to improve myself and the people around me.

What is the most important thing you do to ensure that South Palm resort is running successfully?
I am the CEO of the company. For 2 years, I have personally taken the responsibility of managing the operation because managing an operation in Addu is not an easy task. So far, none of us has been successful in managing properties in Addu City with a good GOR. We, South Palm, as a team, are breaking records in sustaining our business in the best manner and competing with a few of our level properties near Capital Male with many more advantages.

What has been the most challenging part of your hospitality career?
I do not recall any such situation in my career, but being a co-owner and the person managing South Palm Resort, this COVID situation made us strive more and did put us down to our knees.

We are celebrating the Golden Jubilee year of Maldives Tourism in 2022. What are your expectations for the Golden year?
We will celebrate 50 years of Maldivian tourism. As a hotelier, I want to see more Maldivians managing and leading the hospitality business in the future, and I urge everyone to do so. Most importantly, to promote the usage of eco-friendly ways and solar energy to protect our unique ecosystem.

If you could change one regulation in the Maldivian tourism industry, which one would it be and why?
I love to see Maldivian law enforcement enforce and encourage companies to retain Maldivian culture by developing and guiding our school leavers to participate in what we do best as a country.

What is your personal leadership style?
Empowerment. As a new company in the tourism industry, employee happiness, a feeling of shared purpose, and greater collaboration are critical to our success.

How are you adapting to the new normal travel patterns?
Yes, COVID-19 has affected the South Palm Resort operation. We are still in that pit of survival mode. It hit us the most since we launched in December 2019 and suddenly had to close to reduce expenses. COVID-19 trained us to run the resort efficiently. The new normal poses no major challenges. Despite this, many tourists are hesitant to travel due to airline and border restrictions.

What are your major concerns and challenges in operating a resort at the southernmost atoll in the Maldives?
The majority of businesses and resorts in Addu have not been able to get the service required from an international airport. However, we expect authorities to prioritize developing the airport with the resources to manage a successful international airport. The cost of a domestic ticket is another challenge we face. We are expecting additional airline operators to increase competitiveness, which will benefit future guest house operations in Addu City.

Being a hotelier is a dedicated job. What are the biggest lessons that you have learnt in your time in the industry?
Ownership: Ownership of your responsibilities, ownership of your organization, ownership of your team’s development. Taking ownership helps you reach your goals and inspires others to support you.

What is the driving force behind your success?
Thinking about the future. I am a person who loves to take risks. My biggest strength is leading and achieving targeted goals. My weakness is getting fed up if I fail to reach the expected target and wishing to find more and correct it.

What would you be advice to young locals entering this industry and aspire to be in leadership roles?
My advice for hoteliers is to have patience, hard work, and discipline. The industry can improve, but only with your help. Success is not easy. It takes effort and sacrifice to achieve it.

Where do you see yourself in five years?
InshaAllah, I consider myself a person who has contributed big time to the development of the Maldives, especially Addu City. That is something I am very proud of, and I hope to see not only myself, but all the entrepreneurs in the hospitality field, elevate the entire experience and propel Maldives forward.

As a hotelier, I want to see more Maldivians managing and leading the hospitality business in the future, and I urge everyone to do so.
WOMEN IN TOURISM

Aishath Reena
Executive Secretary to the General Manager
Conrad Maldives Rangali Island

“In order to ignite a real shift in the levels of female workers, it is vital to have growth and development targets for all female employees in the hospitality sector.”
Aishath Reena has always possessed a very positive outlook in life, enjoyed socializing with people from all age groups and has a deep passion for helping or being of service to anyone in need. It was these traits that led her to the hospitality industry. Traveling has been one of her greatest passions. With a family that shares the same love for hospitality as she does, her husband also works in the same industry. She was a big dreamer as a child, never limited herself in the possibilities of what she can achieve. Her hospitality career started in 1994 from the Front Office of Bandos Island Resort, moved to Full Moon Resort and ended up with Hilton Group Maldives. She is currently the Executive Secretary to the General Manager at Conrad Maldives Rangali Island.

What motivated you to join the hospitality industry? Where and when did you start from?
I started my hospitality career in 1994 in Front Office for the Bandos Island Resort. Move to the Full Moon Resort in 1998 and in 2000 my life long career journey with the Hilton Group started. My career progressed with the Hilton Group starting at the Front Office Department, Sales to Executive Office and with my current role as Executive Secretary to the General Manager at Conrad Maldives Rangali Island.

My motivation has always been about people and this industry is the perfect place to interact, serve and make a difference in someone’s life. I feel very proud to share our Maldivian culture and unique way of life to our guests with our authentic experiences.

How did you get to this position? What is your favorite part of the job?
As I made my way up in the industry, I realized my potential in organizational and communication skills. While I believed I could further develop and contribute more in an area where these skills can be utilized more such as the Sales department or the Executive Office, I was encouraged and supported by the management to learn and develop further.

The role that we play in the hospitality sector is almost magical - it's like making dreams come true. We have a very high percentage in our resort of repeat guests. Guests that have been visiting for many years and some have become like family. Knowing that these guests choose to spend their holiday with us year after year is only one of the best part of this job and the list goes on.

I also really enjoy mentoring the new team members and guiding them with our Hilton Values and our service ethos and way of life on the Island. I want to ensure the new team members have the same support that I had when I first started my career at Conrad Maldives Rangali Island.

We heard you are the driving force of Conrad Maldives. What is an average workweek like for you?
I believe a true driving force of a company is its culture and its employees collectively. I’m very fortunate to be part of such a diverse and driven team. In my role as Executive Secretary to the General Manager, I interact and collaborate with all the departments with various tasks and projects. A day in the resort is never average and that is the beauty of it. It’s not your typical 9 to 5 job. I support the General Manager with the day-to-day tasks and as well as the Department Heads where necessary. The day’s achievement always boils down to happy and satisfied guests.

My role is very diverse and I support many of the departments and liaise with many of the governmental bodies in the country. I am instrumental in ensuring the resort has all the information, new policies and up to date information to succeed and so our team is supported and our guests have a seamless experience. I enjoy coordinating the change and driving the team to success.

How do you balance work and life responsibilities?
The balancing act is one of the strongest features of a woman. As the saying goes, women are multi-taskers. Although I believe that’s true, I think the motherly character is innate in most women and develops at a very young age. The ability to balance multiple situations, tasks or events is almost second nature to us women. I believe it is important for women to set priorities and boundaries so that balancing both work and family becomes more of a blessing than a burden.

I value my career very much and always make sure that I give my 100%. However, by doing this doesn’t mean I put my family second. I love being a mother and I’ve been blessed with an extremely supportive husband. They are my daily dose of inspiration and the reason why I push the envelope further in my career.

In terms of the current scenario of working women in the Maldives. There has definitely been a progress, seeing more women holding key roles in the hospitality industry is very encouraging. However, the remote island nature of these work places around the Maldives proves to be quite a challenge. Especially for women who have kids living in their home islands.

I am in a very fortunate position where I can work on a resort and have my family live with me and my daughter grow up here and do online classes. It gives us more sense of home and work and this is not always the case in hospitality. It also allows myself to develop further in the company as I feel really valued and supported. I am also very proud to be the role model for the younger Maldivian women team members and to say anything is possible with hard work, a great attitude and support.

What has been the most significant barrier in your career, if any? What skills are most crucial to succeeding in this career?
Although it is true that challenges in life are inevitable, I have always taken them as opportunities for improvement. I believe nothing is ever a barrier as long as one finds a way to overcome any hurdles along the way. Of course in various stages of my career, I had a few hurdles, from proving that a woman can be a strong asset in the work force to demonstrating that a woman can have a career and be a mother at the same time.

In this industry, everything is all about people and service. When it comes to skills, I believe skills are learned and can be further developed. However, values are as important to succeed in one’s career. I have embraced the Hilton values myself and have made them my guide since - Hospitality, Integrity, Leadership, Ownership and NOW!

You have been in the hospitality industry for over 20 years. How would you describe your journey so far?
It has been 27 years since I set foot in this industry and I have never looked back. The joy of creating memorable experiences and making dreams come true for tourist traveling to this bucket list destination is a feeling that I will always treasure.

I am very humbled and proud to have spent most of my career with the Hilton Group. Hilton has played a big part in the country’s history, being the first International hotel brand to operate in Maldives followed by all the amazing ‘firsts’ that was introduced including the first undersea restaurant in the world – Ithaa and the world’s first undersea residence – The Muraka.
I am humbled that I have been part of the growth and development and evolving industry in the Maldives

Hospitality industry is perceived as a male dominated industry especially in leadership roles. Do you think it is challenging for women to work in this industry and get promoted?

It’s sad to even think that this concept still exists in the 20th century. However, the progress and advancement of our country is very promising. With this development also comes the change in mindset on the topic of male versus female in the workforce. I’m very proud to see more women, especially from the local resort brands, taking on key management roles. International brands are also starting to embrace this and have programs in place such as Hilton’s Women in Leadership.

The hospitality industry in the Maldives is very progressive. I think in the future, the number of female in the workforce will continue to grow as long as the company supports and values their contribution. As for leadership roles, the biggest factor for women’s development is based on her support group starting from her family, friends, colleagues and leaders.

Over the last 18 months during the pandemic I interact and work very closely with the HPA, MOT and the people I work with in these organizations are both very strong influential women and together we get through some difficult situations and we do it with transparent communication, respect and never ending support and care at any time of the day. It is so special to be part of a circle of strong, dedicated and powerful women.

What is your view on Maldives tourism? What has been the most meaningful change since you joined? What is the one thing which you wish had changed about this industry?

Women needs policies that supports them in pursuing their careers while also building a family.

This is only the beginning and the best is yet to come for the tourism business in the Maldives. No doubt that this industry is one of the biggest contributors to the growth of the country. With more international hospitality brands opening their properties in the Maldives, the tourism sector has become more competitive. With these new openings, comes new opportunities to the Maldivians. With only 50 years in the tourism industry, we have already set the stage by winning multiple International awards showcasing Maldives as one of the best destinations in the world. I am very proud that as a country we have been able to display the true hospitality of the Maldivians to the world. My only hope is that while we open our doors and welcome tourist to our country, that we are still able to preserve the natural beauty of our environment both land and sea.

I wish we could showcase our unique local culture more and that our younger generation had more opportunity for further education in the tourism and development field.

As we prepare to celebrate 50 years of tourism in the Maldives, what policies can we put into place to make it more attractive and welcoming for female leaders?

I think there needs to be a two-tier approach. First is for the country to introduce an easier access to opportunities for women wanting to join the work force. Second is to enable women, especially those with children, the flexibility in work hours. Women needs policies that supports them in pursuing their careers while also building a family. We have seen work hours flexibility and remote work successfully implemented in other countries and across all industries. I think the hospitality industry is also capable in doing this and support women by allowing them to thrive in all aspects of their life.

In order to ignite a real shift in the levels of female workers, it is vital to have growth and development targets for all female employees in the hospitality sector. Developmental programs that opens doors for female employees not only limited to managerial levels but even beyond.

The biggest wish list would be for schools for the children of the women workforce.

What advice would you give to the young women entering the hospitality industry?

Education is fundamental, values are essential and determination is important. A good and quality education opens many doors for a promising career. Your values, attitude and mindset are key in the hospitality industry because managing people is an important part of the job. Finally, having a strong will and determination will be the driver to your progress and success. I think all this applies to life in general and not only in this industry.

What is your most memorable experience and valuable lesson from the tourism industry so far?

My years of service with the Hilton Group has been very fruitful and I have so many
great memories that I will forever cherish. One of the most recent memories was winning the Manager of the Year Award in 2020. It was the onset of COVID-19, our resort was closed for a few months and so was the entire country. The countrywide lockdown presented its own challenges on the island until we finally re-open in September 2020. It was a year where teamwork was more important than ever. As a team, during the lock down, we needed to keep everyone safe, ensure that those who needed to go back to their home country were reunited safely with their families and for us who were left behind, we had to ensure the safety of the resort and all its assets. Prior to the resort’s re-opening, we had to prepare the resort as if opening a resort for the first time. However, this time we re-open embracing a new normal and with new safety protocols in place. It was a tough year to say least. Every leader had a big role to play. I’m humbled to be awarded the Manager of the Year for my contribution.

Tell us about your other passions? Or careers you’d like to pursue in the future?
Serving and helping people has always been a passion for me. Be it friends, family, colleagues or guests, seeing a smile on their faces is my everyday goal. As the saying goes, to be a “people’s person”, you have to have an energy that draws people to you. Genuine kindness and care doesn’t go unnoticed.

With this passion, I try to live every day with a mindset of making a difference in someone’s life, whether it’s helping young people find their passion in life or inspiring them to pursue their dreams. Who knows one day I may lead a human resources team, as this is one of the careers I would like to pursue in the future.

Who do you look up to for inspiration or mentorship?
I’ve always looked up to Mr. Ahmed Saleem, the Director of Crown Company and our previous owner at Conrad Maldives Rangali Island. He is like a father figure in my life. He is a respected leader and true pioneer in the tourism industry and the brain behind Ithaa – the world’s first undersea restaurant and The Muraka – the world’s first undersea residence. He not only a visionary but also a true leader who leads from the heart. He made an impact in the career of many Maldivians in the hospitality industry. I will always remember the life lessons he has taught me.
Amjad Mohamed is an enthusiastic professional from Haa Alif Muraidhoo who loves to spend his free time playing football and volleyball and enjoys reading. His hospitality career started from Cinnamon Alidhoo as a Waiter. With an eagerness to learn and grow within the hospitality industry, he took an opportunity and joined Taj Exotica as a Butler. In 2017 he moved on to joined Velassaru Maldives as a waiter and prospered professionally. He was promoted as Restaurant Supervisor, and later to Assistant Restaurant Manager. Today he is the Restaurant Manager of the resort.
What was your first hospitality job?
My first hospitality job was at Cinnamon Aalidhoo as a Waiter.

Who and what inspired you to join velassaru Maldives?
The Resort Manager of Furaveri Maldives, Mr. Imaadh inspired me to join Velassaru Maldives. I knew then that Velassaru Maldives will be a great place to learn and grow.

How do you manage your daily work schedule? What is the best part of the job?
I am very committed and dedicated to my work responsibilities. I always ensure that I look into all the areas operation to ensure that the operation runs smoothly and efficiently. The best part of the job is being able to create unique moments and lasting memories for our guests.

What challenges do young people face related to issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion?
I think one of the biggest challenges young people face these days is the generational gap. The world is evolving. If we don’t evolve with it, we will be left behind. We must accept and respect people for who they are.

As an enthusiastic young professional, how would you describe the tourism industry of the Maldives?
I would describe the tourism industry of Maldives as one of the most exciting and successful industries to work in. Every aspect of tourism is great when it comes to career growth, finances, opportunities, gaining knowledge, and most importantly building your skillset.

Are you enjoying resort life? What do you like most about this industry?
Yes, I am very much enjoying the resort life. To be very honest, I truly love the personalized service we get to offer our guests. I love to engage with guests as well as my team as I believe that is a great learning tool. What I love most about the industry is that it is a customer-oriented industry where we do things from our hearts.

What do you miss most?
Well. Not being able to be with my family is a real bummer. Especially due to the covid-19 pandemic, traveling has been limited compared to before. Like everyone else, I am hoping to see better days in the future.

What would be your advice to young locals entering the tourism industry?
Working in hospitality more specifically a remote island away from family and friends can be tough. But if you are prepared and focus on achieving your goals, you will do well in the industry. I think the secret to a successful career is setting goals and then working towards achieving them regardless of the profession. However, if you are to choose hospitality as a profession, I believe that one must be passionate about hospitality.
What has been your most memorable experience in the hospitality industry so far?

It is hard to choose one so I will go for an experience that perhaps many may think has nothing to do with hospitality. However, this does have a lot to do with the hospitality industry (if I do say so myself). During the Covid-19 pandemic, when it was difficult to bring Imaam’s from Male’ to perform Friday prayer, I was informed by the Human Resources Manager of Velassaru that the Ministry of Tourism together with the Ministry of Islamic Affairs were initiating to conduct Imaam Course (online course) for team members who are interested to lead the prayers. I thought about taking part but since I never led a Friday prayer before, I was very nervous. However, my love for our holy religion is great, and given that my nature is to learn more, I decided this is something I want to challenge myself with and enrolled myself in the first batch of the Imaam course back in the year 2020. Every single class was filled with so much knowledge that I did not have before. I completed the course over the period and became the first team member of Velassaru Maldives who had completed the Imaam Course.

I would say one of my most memorable experiences so far in hospitality is the day I lead my first Friday Prayer at Velassaru Maldives. If only I had more words to describe the feelings, I had that day! All I can say is that I am thankful that I got the opportunity to take part in the course and gain the knowledge to do something I love to do.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Ministry of Tourism, the Ministry of Islamic Affairs, and Velassaru Management for extending this wonderful opportunity.

Where do you see yourself in the next five years now?
I dream to be successful both in my personal and professional life. In the future, I see myself taking an advocating role in motivating youth and becoming a career guidance counselor to hospitality.

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My most memorable experiences so far in hospitality is the day I lead my first Friday Prayer at Velassaru Maldives
LIMESTONE

Formed in October 2012, Limestone propelled from a humble jam between comrades to a professional live band.

Hopping from one resort to another, the band is renowned in the Tourism Industry for swinging an array of sounds. With an amalgamation of genres and eras suited for all events, the band caters for diverse experiences. From convivial sun-soaked grooves on the beach, serenading diners in candlelight, wooing newlyweds to float away on their dream clouds or elating the couple celebrating their anniversary as they sweep into nostalgia, the ensemble transports a global audience from one dimension to the next. Swapping from rock to romantic, classics to contemporary the band infuses a beat for each occasion.

The band consists of Inma (Lead Vocalist & Rhythm Guitar), Aleaf (Bass Guitar & Vocalist) Bey (Lead Guitar & Backing Vocalist) and Kudey (Drums/Percussion & Backing Vocalist).

Over the years, the band has performed at numerous resorts: Six Senses Laamu, Conrad Maldives Rangali Island, Fairmont Maldives, The Nautilus Maldives, InterContinental Maldives, Seaside Finolhu, One&Only Reethi Rah, Hard Rock Cafe’ Maldives, Soneva Fushi, Soneva Jani, Velaa Private Island, Amilla Maldives Resort and Residences, just to name a few.

Distinct from most other bands, Limestone offers in-house service where they reside in resorts for long-term periods – an incentive for them to incorporate more tunes so they don't become repetitive for guests. The band also played in Bahrain for a private event and takes pride in their performances with Polina Gagarina (The Voice Russia, Coach) at InterContinental Maldives and with Pixie Lott (The Voice Kids UK, Judge) at Amilla Maldives Resort and Residences.

As their tenth anniversary approaches, Limestone envisions ambitious plans and hopes to bring more sounds and more charm to their audiences.
CRUNCHING NUMBERS

Tourist Arrivals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Arrivals</th>
<th>Growth (%)</th>
<th>Daily Average 2022</th>
<th>Duration of Stay 2022 (days)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Arrivals 2019</strong> 1,702,887</td>
<td></td>
<td>(+14.7) y-o-y</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Arrivals 2020</strong> 555,494</td>
<td></td>
<td>(-67.4) y-o-y</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Arrivals 2021</strong> 1,321,932</td>
<td></td>
<td>(+138) y-o-y</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2021</th>
<th>2022</th>
<th>2022/2021</th>
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<td><strong>January</strong></td>
<td>151,552</td>
<td>173,347</td>
<td>92,103</td>
<td>131,764</td>
<td>43.1</td>
<td>4,250</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total (end Jan)</strong></td>
<td>151,552</td>
<td>173,347</td>
<td>92,103</td>
<td>131,764</td>
<td>43.1</td>
<td>4,250</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tourist Arrivals by Regions

(Arrivals and Growth Rate Year-on-Year)

**AMERICAS**
- **2019**: 84,794 (+23.3%)
- **2020**: 32,060 (-62.2%)
- **2021**: 88,910 (+177.3%)
- **2022**: 8,386 (+118.4%)

**EUROPE**
- **2019**: 833,939 (+14.8%)
- **2020**: 348,349 (-58.2%)
- **2021**: 772,460 (+121.7%)
- **2022**: 100,578 (+57.8%)

**AFRICA**
- **2019**: 18,695 (+21.8%)
- **2020**: 6,458 (-65.5%)
- **2021**: 27,442 (+324.9%)
- **2022**: 1,339 (+50.4%)

**MIDDLE EAST**
- **2019**: 60,003 (+15.1%)
- **2020**: 26,288 (-56.2%)
- **2021**: 91,413 (+247.7%)
- **2022**: 5,103 (+115.6%)

**ASIA & THE PACIFIC**
- **2019**: 705,140 (+13.5%)
- **2020**: 142,243 (-79.8%)
- **2021**: 341,395 (+140.0%)
- **2022**: 16,338 (-23.1%)

Maldives Tourism Bulletin
Top 10 Markets by Nationality
(as at end January 2022)

1. Russia
   - 17.7% Shares
   - 23,347 arrivals
     +11.3% over 2021

2. U.K
   - 10.0% Shares
   - 13,182 arrivals
     +426.4% over 2021

3. India
   - 8.2% Shares
   - 10,751 arrivals
     -43.8% over 2021

4. Italy
   - 7.8% Shares
   - 10,293 arrivals
     +1674.7% over 2021

5. Germany
   - 7.6% Shares
   - 10,018 arrivals
     +195.5% over 2021

6. Ukraine
   - 4.1% Shares
   - 5,355 arrivals
     -25.7% over 2021

7. France
   - 3.9% Shares
   - 5,158 arrivals
     +38.4% over 2021

8. U.S.A
   - 3.8% Shares
   - 5,027 arrivals
     +156.5% over 2021

9. Saudi Arabia
   - 2.4% Shares
   - 3,189 arrivals
     +6986.7% over 2021

10. Austria
    - 2.2% Shares
    - 2,925 arrivals
     +148.5% over 2021

ToP 10 ARRIVALS by Country of Residence
(as at end January 2022)

1. 21,536 arrivals from Russia
   - 98.8% of arrivals were Russians

2. 13,135 arrivals from U.K
   - 91.8% of arrivals were Brits

3. 9,503 arrivals from India
   - 97.9% of arrivals were Indians

4. 9,410 arrivals from Italy
   - 97.5% of arrivals were Italians

5. 9,233 arrivals from Germany
   - 92.5% of arrivals were Germans

6. 4,914 arrivals from Ukraine
   - 98.1% of arrivals were Ukrainians

7. 4,796 arrivals from U.S.A
   - 88.9% of arrivals were Americans

8. 3,499 arrivals from France
   - 98.1% of arrivals were French

9. 3,176 arrivals from Saudi Arabia
   - 91.2% of arrivals were Saudis

10. 3,030 arrivals from Switzerland
    - 75.7% of arrivals were Swiss
### Airlines Operating to the Maldives

**January 2022**

**Scheduled:** 25

**Chartered:** 10

#### Europe

- Aeroflot
- Air France
- Air Ukraine
- Austrian Airlines
- Azur Air Russia
- British Airways
- Condor
- Edelweiss
- Lufthansa
- Neos
- Nordwind
- Turkish Airlines

#### Middle East

- Emirates
- Etihad Airways
- FlyDubai
- Gulf Air
- Qatar Airways
- Saudi Arabian Airlines

#### Others

- Air Asia Thailand
- Air Seychelles
- Singapore Airlines
- SriLankan Airlines
- Mongolian Airlines
- US-Bangla Airlines

#### India

- Air India
- GoAir
- Indigo
- Air Vistara

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*Maldives Tourism Bulletin*
Tourist Facilities
(In Operation as at end January 2022)

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<td>6</td>
<td>92 Beds</td>
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SH. ATO LL
2 Resorts 457 Beds
0 Hotels 0 Beds
3 Guesthouses 24 Beds

N. ATO LL
8 Resorts 2,180 Beds
0 Hotels 0 Beds
6 Guesthouses 64 Beds

L.H. ATO LL
10 Resorts 2,504 Beds
0 Hotels 0 Beds
4 Guesthouses 44 Beds

K. ATO LL
5.3 Resorts 12,814 Beds
5 Hotels 780 Beds
241 Guesthouses 5,704 Beds

V. ATO LL
4 Resorts 694 Beds
0 Hotels 0 Beds
50 Guesthouses 596 Beds

M. ATO LL
2 Resorts 440 Beds
0 Hotels 0 Beds
4 Guesthouse 36 Beds

L. ATO LL
2 Resorts 342 Beds
0 Hotels 0 Beds
3 Guesthouses 138 Beds

G.A. ATO LL
6 Resorts 1,279 Beds
1 Hotels 144 Beds
7 Guesthouse 56 Beds

G.N. ATO LL
0 Resorts 0 Beds
0 Hotels 0 Beds
18 Guesthouses 220 Beds

S. ATO LL
1 Resorts 260 Beds
2 Hotels 802 Beds
13 Guesthouses 222 Beds

Maldives Tourism Bulletin
MONTH IN REVIEW

Maldives Welcomes the First Tourist of 2022

Maldives welcomed the first visitor for the year 2022 with a special celebration at the Velana International Airport. The visitor, Georgina Canning and her partner from United Kingdom were greeted at the airport by officials from Ministry of Tourism and Maldives Marketing and Public Relations Corporation (MMPRC) along with Maldives Immigration and Maldives Airports Company Limited (MACL). Ms. Canning received a 5 Night Holiday with full board meal plan for two people at Adaaran Prestige Vadoo.

The first visitor for the year from Maldives each of top 10 markets to the Maldives were also welcomed at the airport with special gifts from the Ministry of Tourism.

Associations & Council Members Meet Minister of Tourism

On the 3rd January 2022, members from the National Boating Association of Maldives, along with their newly elected president, Mr. Ismail Hammed met with Minister of Tourism, Dr. Abdulla Mausoom. Discussions were focused on the opportunities and challenges relating to the Maldives safari boat sector.

On 3rd January 2022, Huvadhoo Association of Tourism Board members along with members from G.Dh. Vaadhoo Council met Minister of Tourism, Dr. Abdulla Mausoom, to discuss community based sustainable tourism development in G.Dh. Vaadhoo.

On 4th January 2022, members of the G.A. Vilingili Council and Constituency MP, Mr. Saud Hussain met the Minister of Tourism, Dr. Abdulla Mausoom and discussed tourism development & related opportunities for the island.
Re-Skilling Courses in Laamu Atoll

Under the Reimagining Tourism Project, the Ministry of Tourism and UNDP has partnered with Maldives Polytechnic to announce 2, certificate level 3 courses in Laamu Atoll. The courses include, CIII in guesthouse management and CIII in small business management. The two courses are aimed at encouraging development of local tourism businesses including homestays, guesthouses, and other businesses to increase tourism benefits to communities and stimulate the local economy.

The Ministry especially encourages participation of youth and women in these courses to increase the number of young people and women engaged in the industry. The deadline for the applications is set for the 26th of January 2022.

Ministry of Tourism Facilitates Covid-19 Vaccine Booster Doses for Tourism Sector Employees

The Ministry Tourism facilitates Covid-19 Booster Vaccine doses for the tourism sector frontline employees in association with the Health Protection Agency of the Maldives. As of 26th January, a total of 3,026 tourism frontline employees have been administered the booster shot.

Under the "I'm vaccinated" campaign which began in 2021, 98% of the tourism frontline workers have got two doses of the COVID-19 vaccine by the third week of January 2022.

From January 14th Ministry of Tourism has organized daily booster jabs for Airport Representatives in Maldives. The booster jabs are given daily from 09:00 am to 10:00 am at Velana International Airport Recreational Center. Representatives should take their Rep card, ID card and their vaccine cards.
Ministry of Tourism Launches Tourism Golden Jubilee Ringtones

Ministry of Tourism in affiliation with Dhiraagu and Ooredoo Maldives has launched Maldives Tourism Golden Jubilee Ringtone. The Golden Year Ringtontone is based on the official theme song for the year ‘Nala Nala Raajje’! The ringtones are free for download via Ooredoo SMS “TONE 226981” to 4000 and Dhiraagu SMS “TONE 50338” to 155.

Tourism Diversification & Localization Team Visits Gaafu Alifu Atoll

The Tourism Diversification & Localization team of Ministry of Tourism continued their atoll tour and visited Gaafu Alifu Atoll from 20th to 23rd January 2022. The team was accompanied by MP of Dhaandhoo Constituency Mr. Yagoob Abdulla and G.A Atoll council president, Mr. Ibrahim Shaheen. The Gaafu Alifu tour kicked off by, visiting Kandhulhudhoo followed by Gemanafushi. Meetings were held with each islands respective councils where the discussions were focused on local tourism development opportunities.

On 21st January the team visited Kondey and Dhaandhoo to meet with the island’s council and local entrepreneurs and discuss ways to develop local tourism in these islands. They continued their tour on 22nd January by visiting Nilandhoo, Maamendhoo, Villingili and Kolamaafushi and discussed ways to develop tourism in these islands.

They concluded the tour after visiting and meeting with the island council and women’s development committee of G.A Dheevadhoo on 23rd January.
Marketing Campaign with Kuoni France

Maldives Marketing and public Relation Corporation (MMPRC) has joined Kuoni France for a month-long marketing campaign which will be held from 06th January 2022 to 06th February 2022. During this campaign, Maldives will be advertised through articles, photos, and newsletters and will be posted on all digital and social media platforms of Kuoni.

Advertising Campaign with ITAKA

The Maldives Marketing and Public Relations Corporation (MMPRC) has initiated a joint advertising campaign with popular tour operator ITAKA, targeting the Polish market. This month-long campaign began in January 2022. With over 30 years of experience, ITAKA is one of the most popular tour operators in Poland.

Under the joint campaign between MMPRC and ITAKA, digital marketing and outdoor ambient activities will be conducted to promote the renowned products and uniquely-Maldivian experiences. The campaign will see google ads published on major Polish websites and portals, social media platforms, and push messages and emails sent through Polish travel trade to potential tourists. Slides with destination advertisements on App TV in 150 shops around Poland will be displayed during the campaign. Furthermore, outdoor advertising will be placed in 2 areas of Poland during this campaign.

Journalists from Japan Visit Maldives for Familiarization Trip

The Maldives Marketing and Public Relations Corporation, MMPRC has invited several journalists from Japan to visit the Maldives on a familiarization (FAM) trip. The Japanese journalists arrived in the Maldives for the event, which will be conducted from 11th - 17th January 2022. This is the first FAM trip organized by MMPRC this year. The journalists from Japan consist of writers from publications and magazines which are highly popular among affluent audiences in the Japanese market, with a combined reach of millions.
Joint Campaign Kicked off with Italy’s Sporting Vacanze

Maldives Marketing and Public Relations Corporation, MMPRC has kicked off a month-long marketing campaign with Italy’s Sporting Vacanze. The campaign will be held from January to February 2022. The campaign will see dedicated web marketing, social media advertising of Maldives posted on popular websites and social media accounts of corrieredellosport.it and tuttiport.it and Italo magazine. This campaign aims to create greater engagement and affinity with the Maldives among Italians.

MMPRC Signs Global Advertising Agreement with BBC Global News

The Maldives Marketing and Public Relations Corporation has signed a global advertising agreement with BBC Global News, incorporating their in-house commercial content studio, BBC Storyworks. The agreement was signed by the Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director, Thoyib Mohamed, on behalf of MMPRC, and the Senior Vice President, Commercial Operations, BBC Studios, Mr Nick Charlton, on behalf of BBC Global News. The agreement will see MMPRC launch an international advertising campaign with BBC Global News, designed to showcase the nation as a safe, prepared and welcoming luxury destination, through the voices of the people of the Maldives.

During the campaign, relevant and engaging content about the people, places and culture that make the Maldives so wonderfully diverse and unique will be circulated on the international digital platforms of the BBC. This will include specially commissioned brand stories and videos created by BBC StoryWorks as well as social media promotion.

“Experience Live from Maldives” Social Media Series Launched

The Maldives Marketing and Public Relations Corporation, MMPRC has launched a 10-episode series titled “Experience Live from Maldives” to share live experiences from Maldives to viewers worldwide. The livestreams will target key tourism markets and is aimed to inspire to visit Maldives.

The series was launched on Facebook and YouTube and was shared via MMPRC’s social media channels to reach a larger audience. Localized social media handles for different countries were used to advertise this series.
Maldives Take Part in FITUR 2022

Maldives Marketing and Public Relations Corporation, together with industry partners took part in the biggest global trade fairs in Spain held from 19th to 23rd January 2022. FITUR brings together travel agencies, wholesalers and other tourism industry professionals. The Maldives is represented at the fair by MMPRC along with 13 registered tourism industry partners.

Visit Maldives Kicks off Campaign with News UK

The Maldives Marketing and Public Relations Corporation, MMPRC has started a campaign with News UK to raise awareness and strengthen the brand awareness for Maldives in the country. News UK is a mass media company that distributes news through newspapers, websites and radio broadcasting and they are the current publishers of The Times, The Sunday Times and The Sun newspaper. This campaign is conducted from January to February and information on Maldives will be published and on their news distribution platforms. The purpose of this campaign is to promote Maldives as a dream holiday destination.
‘Savaadheeththa Dhathuru’ is a sailing event organized by the Maldives Integrated Tourism Development Corporation (MITDC) inviting sailors from all across the globe to participate in a journey across the Maldives seas, making stops at local islands, exploring the culture, heritage, experiencing famous dive sites, sandbanks etc. The rally begins on February 2022 starting from the most northern atoll of the country, Haa Ail Atoll, taking a course of 2 weeks to reach Baa Atoll. The rally is designed to visit a total of 13 islands.

‘Savaadheeththa Dhathuru’- coined as a tribute to one of the greatest heroes in Maldives history, Mohamed Thakurufohanu (Savaadheeththa Munaadhu), is the fruition of MITDC’s efforts to introduce Heritage Tourism to the country’s blooming tourism industry. The journey is devised to visit protected heritage & historical sites, experience the island lifestyle & to witness untouched natural beauty of the country. Through these efforts MITDC intend to promote Sail Tourism and exploit the benefits to strengthen the position we hold as the Leading Destination in world tourism.

Savaadheeththa Dhathuru Maldives Yacht Rally 2022 was officially launched on 23rd of August 2021 at the Maldives National Museum.

At the launching event Managing Director Mohamed Raadh highlighted the importance of bringing diversification to the Maldives Tourism Industry and discussed the importance of promoting Community-Based Tourism in local islands. He also quoted President His Excellency Ibrahim Mohamed Solih’s speech on the 100th anniversary of Mulaaage (Presidential Palace) on December 2019, that called for the introduction of Heritage Tourism and its importance in the Maldives. This notable speech by the President was the inspiration that steered the MITDC team to organize the Savaadheeththa Dhathuru yacht rally. The team believes the significance of sail tourism of an archipelago such as Maldives is the best way to explore the real Maldives and such a rally would attract a lot of exposure to the cultural component in the country’s Tourism Industry.

The very first international marketing event was held at the prestigious Dubai Offshore Sail Club, during October 2021, where an overwhelming support was received from yachtsmen at the Club. A lucky draw was made for on-the-spot registrations. After the Q&A session it was evident that the whole sail community is looking forward for an exotic journey to experience the thrill of sailing through the Maldives.

**ACTIVITIES**

Participation for Savaadheeththa Dhathuru Yacht Rally is open for sailors from all across the globe to partake in the first ever yacht rally across the Maldives islands. For more information visit the official website of the yacht rally www.maldivesyachtrally.com
JOALI Maldives Silver Certified by EarthCheck

By: Joali Maldives

JOALI Maldives, the country’s first and only art immersive resort, has achieved Silver Certification from EarthCheck, the world’s leading business advisory group specialising in sustainability for the tourism industry.

The resort is a passionate supporter of sustainability and is devoted to responsible luxury. It features an array of original, experiential works of art and dynamic design, all of which reflect the beauty of nature and are built with sustainability in mind.

JOALI Maldives is committed to eliminate single-use plastic and offers eco-friendly alternatives to all guests and staff. All amenities are vegan and chemical-free to protect corals and sea life. Local goods are sourced from neighbouring islands, where possible, and many vegetables and herbs are grown at its organic Chef’s Garden. JOALI Maldives focuses on reducing waste; food and garden waste are composted to natural fertilizer; packaging, cans, glass, and paper waste are recycled; and wastewater is treated and reused. The resort is also home to a desalinating water bottling plant which allows to produce its own drinking water in glass bottles.

Supporting ecological conservation, JOALI Maldives' Reef Restoration Programme promotes the natural recovery of the island’s surrounding reef ecosystem, whereby “fragments of hope” — tiny corals are transplanted onto the existing house reef to help it regenerate.

Enver Arslan, General Manager of JOALI Maldives, commented: “We intrain social and environmental responsibility in our organizational culture and all that we do. With this achievement, we have joined industry leaders who are taking meaningful steps towards creating a sustainable future.”

Stewart Moore, CEO and Founder of EarthCheck, added: “JOALI Maldives has taken a significant leadership position in sustainability.”

JOALI Maldives was evaluated on ten key performance areas including energy and water consumption, total waste production, and community commitment. EarthCheck Certification establishes a five-level standard — Bronze, Silver, Gold, Platinum, Master — based on the number of years the organization is certified: Gold after 5 years of continuous certification, Platinum after 10 years and Master after 15 years.
Recognition for Conservation Progress
By: Six Senses Laamu

MUI, the marine biology team at Six Senses Laamu, consisting of hosts from the resort and its three partner NGOs: The Manta Trust, Blue Marine Foundation and The Olive Ridley Project, has been named Marine and Coastal category winner at the 2021 Skál International Sustainable Tourism Awards. This is the second Skál trophy on display at Six Senses Laamu after the resort was crowned winners of the same category in 2018. Three independent sustainability experts judged 50 entrees from 26 countries, placing MUI top in its category ahead of five other projects.

“To receive this award twice is an incredible achievement,” explains Marteyne van Well, Six Senses Laamu General Manager, “and it is testament to the progress MUI has made in the realms of marine conservation since we won our first Skál Award three years ago.”

This award celebrates the team’s dedication to marine conservation through their research, education and community outreach work. Their research has been presented at both science symposiums and governmental meetings to drive policy change. They have provided 199 children in Laamu with marine conservation and environmental education and brought 566 students from local schools on snorkeling excursions. Since 2019, they have had 26,000 moments of education with guests and certified 185 children through their Junior Marine Biology Program.
Villa Resorts announces achievement of the WELL Health-Safety Rating for its resorts

By: Villa Hotels & Resorts

Villa Hotels & Resorts announced today it has earned the WELL Health-Safety Rating for its resorts Paradise Island, Sun Island and Royal Island through the International WELL Building Institute (IWBI). The WELL Health-Safety Rating is an evidence-based, third-party verified rating for all new and existing building and space types focusing on operational policies, maintenance protocols, stakeholder engagement and emergency plans to address a post-COVID-19 environment now and into the future.

Designed to empower owners and operators across large and small businesses alike to take the necessary steps in order to prioritize the health and safety of their staff, visitors and stakeholders, the WELL Health-Safety Rating can help guide users in preparing their spaces for re-entry in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, instilling confidence in those who come through the building as well as the broader community.

In referring to the success of the WELL Health-Safety Rating, Rachel Hodgdon, President & CEO of the International WELL Building Institute said, "None of this would be possible without organizations like Villa Hotels and Resorts, that have demonstrated commitment to people’s health and safety by achieving the WELL Health-Safety Rating for Facility Operations and Management of Villa Resorts, Maldives."
“Kasabu Libaas”
The Art of Maldivian Embroidery

By: Hasaana Hassan

Maldives is known all over the world for the country's crystal-clear waters and white sandy beaches. But the colourful history of local culture shows that the country is much more than its natural beauty. The Maldivian traditional dress, Kasabu Libaas, shows the rich culture of the country and talent of the Maldivian people. The Libaas has become one of the symbols of the country due to its historical and cultural significance. The significance of the dress can even be seen from the 100 Rufiyaa bill, which shows a woman doing traditional embroidery work while wearing a red Kasabu Libaas.

Kasabu refers to the beautiful neckline of the dress while Libaas directly translates to dress. The Kasabu Libaas is known to come in different colours but mostly worn in red, green, and white, the colours of the Maldivian flag. Even though Libaas come in different colours, to this day red remains the most loved by the Maldivian people. Prior to the introduction of the Libaas, the Maldivian women were known to only wear Feyli and left their upper body uncovered.

There are only guesses to where the dress originated from. One of the first recorded description of Libaas was around 400 years ago, by Sailor Francois Pyrad de laval who described the Maldivian attire as ‘As for the women, they have a large colored cloth of cotton or silk, which covers them from the waist to the ankles, and serves as a petticoat. Above this they wear a robe of taffetas, or of very fine cotton, but very long, reaching to the feet, and with blue and white borders. To give a notion of its shape, I cannot better describe this robe than by comparing it to the chemises which the women wear here in France’

Back in the day the Kasabu Libaas was only worn by women when they reached puberty or sometimes after marriage. Only the wealthy were known to have the neckline with the colourful embroidery work while some ladies wore the dress without it.

One of the country’s most unique needlework can be seen from the neckline of the Libaas. Cotton, silk, and metallic threads are used to make the embroidered section of the dress ‘Kasabu Boavalhu.’

Kasabu Viyun is an embroidery work that consists of beautiful colored ribbons made from special equipment and then hand sewn into the dress’s neckline. This is a time-consuming
process that takes several hours to bring it to perfection. Maldivian women used to meet in groups to keep each other company while they finished their exquisite needlework.

The dress’s exquisite necklines are created using unique equipment known as Gathafaaf. The Gathafaaf has a vase shaped wooden base with a round cushion on top. The cushion is normally filled with cloth or sometimes even cotton which helps to pin the threads on top. A 5-inch-long wooden stick, Foaaliba, is then used as a weight to hold the ribbon while braiding. Since the Foaaliba needs to be heavy enough to hold the threads down, it is often made from sturdy wood or fishbone. Around 34 of these wooden weights can be used at the same time.

Threads of various colours are used during the braiding process to create the ribbon. The 3 main types of ribbons are referred to as Hiri, Bagiyaa and Rodhigandu. The stunning finished ribbons are then hand stitched into the neckline of the dress in a specific order.

The final completed Libaas is worn with a black underskirt referred to as a Feyli, wrapped around their waist. The Feyli is often patterned in black and white which compliments the vibrant dress. The Kasabu Libaas is not complete without some gold jewellery. Back in the day some wealthy women were known to decorate themselves with gold chains (Fattarubai) and gold or silver bracelets (Ulha).

Although it is difficult to find people who still practice traditional Kasabu viyun, some local fashion designers have been known to use the outfit as inspiration for their own work, resulting in more modernised versions of the traditional Libaas. This not only helps in preserving the culture, but it also helps to highlight Maldivian talent. The Kasabu Libaas is still widely worn by Maldivians at various special functions such as weddings and cultural festivals. There’s no denying that the Kasabu libaas has become one of the most symbolic and beloved pieces of Maldivian culture.