



## TRIP OVERVIEW

Join us on this unforgettable open water swimming holiday in the island paradise of The Maldives. Our beautiful liveboard boat is the perfect base from which to explore one of the most spectacular and idyllic destinations on the planet with a small and intimate group of swimmers.

With 26 coral atolls and well over a thousand palm-fringed islands, The Maldives is known around the world as the ultimate holiday paradise. The blue skies, crystal clear waters and a mesmerising array of coral and marine life of the Vaavu and South Malé atolls makes it a peaceful sanctuary for eight days of swimming and cruising. From circumnavigations of local islands to challenging crossing between islets and spectacular views of the area's world-renowned reefs, this is the ultimate way to explore this stunning equatorial archipelago.

Between swims, our liveboard vessel journeys in and around the stunning local atolls in order to find the best swimming opportunities available. The trip is fully catered with all meals prepared for us by our very own onboard chef.

On top of the organised swims which are included in the trip itinerary, there is also plenty of time to take part in additional activities throughout the trip, including snorkeling, scuba diving (extra cost), night fishing and cultural dancing.

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## WHO IS THIS TRIP FOR?

This trip is for swimmers who want to explore the many wonders that the stunning Maldives islands, atolls and reefs have to offer. From the crystal clear waters to some of the most vibrant marine life on the planet, The Maldives is the perfect location to take part in a swimming adventure holiday that you will never forget. Swimmers should have a basic understanding of open water swimming and be capable of completing the average daily swim distance of around 5 km prior to the start of the trip.

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## LOCATION SUMMARIES

The Maldives is a tropical nation in the Indian Ocean composed of 21 coral atolls, which are made up of hundreds of islands. It's known for its beaches, blue lagoons and extensive reefs.

### South Malé Atoll

The South Malé Atoll is oblong in shape and 35 km in length. It contains 22 islands, most of which are situated on its eastern fringes. There are many reefs and coral patches within the atoll. Much of the lagoon has deep water with sandy bottoms.



## Vaavu Atoll

Vaavu Atoll has a very irregular outline made up of continuous barrier reefs and small coral patches separated by narrow passages with a large inner lagoon. There are only 10 islands in the atoll although it is quite large. The atoll's western horn is devoid of islands and almost completely enclosed. Its eastern cape is the easternmost geographical point of the Maldives.

## TRIP SCHEDULE

Start Point	Malé International Airport
Start Time	11:00 on Day 1
Finish Point	Malé International Airport
Finish Time	09:00 on Day 8

**Please note that the below daily itineraries are an example of the swims that may take place during the course of your trip, however, actual swim locations and distances will vary according to local weather and sea conditions. Your SwimTrek guides and local boat pilot will determine the most suitable swim locations each day and will communicate the plan with all guests as soon as possible.**

### Day 1

Our SwimTrek representative will meet you at the Airport Information Desk located in front of the pharmacy and left luggage room in between the arrival and departure gates at Malé International Airport at 11:00 on Day 1 of your trip. A short boat transfer takes you to our liveboard vessel 'MV Sharifa' where we meet on the ship's sun deck.

As we journey towards the South Malé Atoll, you will enjoy a welcome drink and meet your fellow swimmers, your SwimTrek guides and MV Sharifa's local boat crew. On arrival into Guraidhoo Reef, we discuss the plans for the week and have our safety briefing before a tour of our liveboard vessel which will be our home for the next seven nights. Following this we get into the tranquil waters of the Indian Ocean for the first time for our acclimatisation swim.

Back on board, we enjoy the first of our tasty dinners, a blend of modern Asian cuisine with a Western touch which are prepared by our very own on board chef.

### Day 2

This morning our boat weighs anchor and heads for Vaavu Atoll, which we will traverse in its entirety over the next few days.



On entering the atoll, we arrive at Fulidhoo Island where the boat anchors off. As we jump in the water for our first swim of the day, we hug the outer edge of the reef and experience the abundance of coral and marine life just beneath the surface and admire the sudden drop to the depths below. It's an excellent first swim as the local island makes an ideal sighting point.

This afternoon we hop between reefs and swim along Kunavashi Reef. Watch as the flawless white sand changes to delicate corals and then to deep blues in the intersecting channels. We pause at the reef to video your swimming stroke for playback analysis and technique advice later in the evening.

### **Day 3**

Awake to the sun rising over the Indian Ocean and casting its warm light on the Vaavu Atoll.

Today's swims take place on the Raggadu Kandu Reef, which features a number of sandbars which make excellent stop-off points. The reef here is only a few metres below the surface, so the wildlife is right in front of our eyes. During the swim, we cross over to another reef using MV Sharifa as our sighting point. This swim features a number of gaps in the reef, from where it is possible to enter the sandy lagoon inside. It really is a marvellous swim. We pass alongside a hummock of sand with its resident reef fish and sea turtles before setting foot on a sandbank to finish the morning's adventure.

After our well-earned lunch, we head to circumnavigate the house reef of Anbarra Island where both soft and hard coral thrive against a vertical drop off creating the ideal home for colourful reef fish. Also, don't be surprised if you see a squadron of eagle rays sweep across the sand beneath you.

In the evening, we disembark MV Sharifa to enjoy a spectacular BBQ on the uninhabited Anbaraa Island, as the sun sets over the Vaavu Atoll which is laid out before us.

### **Day 4**

This morning we head east towards Rakheedo Island by swimming a section of Bodumohora Falhu - the largest reef in the Vaavu Atoll. Tuna, turtles, and Napoleon wrasse are some of the marine life who may join us on today's drift with the current.

After a hearty lunch of tuna, chicken and local dishes, we swim in the most easterly point not just of Vaavu Atoll but the entire Maldives. We start off above a sandy floor, using the drop off to the reef as a natural lane marker and swimming past the uninhabited Fontheyo Bodu Mohora Island. Dolphins have been spotted here previously, as well as plenty of other interesting marine life.

After dinner, if you have energy in reserve, you have the chance to join in some night fishing.

### **Day 5**

This morning we travel to Gira Fahu Reef where we'll be completing our biggest swim of the week and



one of the highlights of the trip.

We start at the shipwreck of an old fishing boat that got too close to the reef during a storm. The views underneath the water here are simply spectacular. From here, we swim around the near perfect semi-circle that Gira Fahu Reef forms, before a final crossing to Keyodhoo Island. This swim offers a kaleidoscope of marine species and lively corals, enough to motivate any tired shoulders. You will be amazed by the coral formations and large boulders found in this reef.

After our big morning swim, the afternoon is set aside for either a chance to try scuba diving, to put your feet on the sand for an afternoon island visit to Fulidhoo Island or a snorkel from the house reef. After dinner we have another taste of island life as we join the locals for a wonderful evening on cultural dancing.

### **Day 6**

This morning, we head up the eastern side of South Malé Atoll until we reach Guraidhoo's House Reef. From here, we jump in following the colourful reef. Near the end we paddle through the shallows and swim up onto a private beach.

Following lunch, we move higher up South Malé Atoll. Our next swim is along the Villivaru Reef, finishing at the uninhabited Villivaru Island where Eagle Rays and turtles have been spotted previously. There is a chance for a Guraidhoo Island visit where the crew can show you around their home island.

### **Day 7**

Our morning swim is one of contrasts as we swim close to Fushi Dhiggaru. The swimming here is varied and we can normally benefit from a current pushing us along the reef. There is a rich biodiversity within this atoll. Our beautiful liveboard MV Sharifa is our target point for this swim and you truly can swim as far or as little as you want.

In the afternoon we head to Kurumba Island to partially circumnavigate it. Keep an eye out for the resident Nurse Shark population as well as countless fish species. It's a wonderful way to finish off the swimming leg of our journey before our final onboard dinner.

### **Day 8**

Following a relaxed breakfast onboard MV Sharifa, our dhoni boat will drop you back at Malé International Airport for approximately 09:00. If you require an earlier transfer to catch a morning flight, please let your guides know so that this can be arranged.



## TRIP INFORMATION

### Essential Equipment Checklist

In addition to your daily non-swimming clothes, we recommend that you bring the following items:

✓	Item	✓	Item
<input type="checkbox"/>	Swimming Costume (x 2)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Small Daypack
<input type="checkbox"/>	Tinted Swimming Goggles (x 2)*	<input type="checkbox"/>	Waterproof Jacket
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sun Hat and Sunglasses	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sweater / Fleece
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Waterproof Sun Cream (Factor 30+ or higher or zinc)</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Flip Flops
<input type="checkbox"/>	Rash Vest and Leggings/Jammers for Swimming	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sarong
<input type="checkbox"/>	Towel**	<input type="checkbox"/>	Insect Repellent
<input type="checkbox"/>	Lightweight Conservative Outfit***	<input type="checkbox"/>	High SPF Lip balm
<input type="checkbox"/>	Aqua Shoes (to wade between boats and islands)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Drink/Water Bottle

\*Try to bring one clear lens and one tinted lens for different light conditions.

\*\*A towel will be provided on board, however, please do feel free to bring your own along if preferred.

\*\*\*Please bring a lightweight conservative outfit which covers your shoulders and thighs and which you can wear for our island visits to Muslim communities.

Note: Your normal swimwear will be perfectly suitable for the liveaboard boat and the majority of our swims. When swimming near inhabited islands, swimming costumes and rashvests are more appropriate than a bikini, however, your guide will let you know when this is applicable.

Please note that SwimTrek will supply swim hats and provide water and electrolyte drinks in shared water bottles on your safety boat. If you prefer to use your own drink bottle, please feel free to bring one along. If you would like to use a wetsuit, rash vest or fins during your swims, please ensure that you bring these with you.

### Suncare

Due to the equatorial nature of the weather in The Maldives, the sun can be extremely strong, so please take the necessary steps to ensure you are well protected. Plenty of very high factor, waterproof sun cream, zinc, long-sleeved rash vests and leggings/jammers and a good sun hat are **essential** for protection from the sun, particularly during morning swims.

### Group Size and Boat Support

This trip has a maximum group size of 14 swimmers, with space for an additional two non-swimmers to join us, and will be accompanied by two SwimTrek guides and a local boat crew. The group will be



split into a maximum of two groups based on speed, each of which is accompanied by their own safety vessel/escort.

## TRIP GRADING

### Swimming Distances

Swim*	Distance	Swim*	Distance
Fulidhoo House Reef	3km	Fontheyo Bodu Mohora	4km
Kunavashi Long Reef	2km	Giraa Fahu to Keyodhoo	5km
Raggadu Kandu	3.5km	Ohuveli House Reef	3km
Kuda Anvuvari Falhu	2km	Villivaru House Reef	2km
Anbaraa House Reef Circumnavigation	2km	Fushidhinggaru Falhu	3km

\*Please note that these swims are an example of the what may take place during the course of your trip and should be used as a guide only. Actual swim locations and distances will vary according to local weather and sea conditions.

### Swimming Conditions

Swimming in the sea is a fantastic experience but you need to be aware that marine life is abundant in the Maldives. Stonefish, scorpionfish, lionfish, jellyfish, sea urchins and coral could be present during the swims. In all cases we will work on reducing your contact with these creatures, however if you suffer from anaphylaxis please consult the office prior to booking.

### Temperatures

Month	Water Temperature*	Air Temperature*
February	28-29°C / 83-84°F	27-31°C / 80-88°F
March	28-30°C / 83-85°F	27-31°C / 81-89°F
April	29-31°C / 85-87°F	28-32°C / 82-89°F
November	28-30°C / 83-85°F	26-30°C / 79-86°F

\*Please note that these temperatures are indicative and should be used as a guide only.

### Weather Caveat

For safety reasons, we rely on decent weather conditions when carrying out our swims. As a



consequence, open water swimming holidays require a certain degree of on-trip flexibility which can result in changes to the planned itinerary. These changes often add a touch of uniqueness to your trip and will be communicated to you by your SwimTrek guides as quickly as possible.

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## **GETTING THERE**

Flights to the Maldives are widely available from most international destinations, however, due to its isolated location in the Indian Ocean, multi-leg journeys are usually required to reach the islands.

While we have outlined various travel options below, they are subject to change and should be used as a guide only. We suggest that you use [www.skyscanner.net](http://www.skyscanner.net) to search for alternative flight options for this trip.

Whichever route you choose to take, we recommend confirming your flights and other travel arrangements as early as possible in order to avoid price rises and availability issues.

### **Travel to Malé International Airport (MLE)**

The only airport in the Maldives which services international flights is Malé International Airport, which is also known as Velana International Airport and is located on Hulhule island, just a 20-minute ferry ride from the capital, Malé.

To search for available flights into Male International Airport, please visit [www.skyscanner.net](http://www.skyscanner.net).

Once you have booked your flights and any pre-trip accommodation in the Maldives, please ensure that you forward this information to [info@swimtrek.com](mailto:info@swimtrek.com) as soon as possible.

### **Malé International Airport to Liveboard Vessel**

Once you arrive at Malé International Airport, one of your SwimTrek guides will meet you the Airport Information Desk located in front of the pharmacy and left luggage room in between the arrival and departure gates, at the designated trip start time of 11:00 am. From here, you will be transferred from the airport to your liveboard accommodation. Please note that this transfer is included as part of your package price.

### **Arriving Early**

Guests who arrive in the Maldives prior to the start of their SwimTrek trip must organise with their hotel to be transferred back to Malé International Airport in time to meet the SwimTrek group on Day 1 of the trip.

This transfer should be organised with your hotel during the check-in process in order to ensure you





arrive at the airport in time for the start of your SwimTrek trip. Please note that confirmation of the exact departure time from your hotel will usually not be available until the night before the transfer.

**IMPORTANT:** Please note that it is not possible to meet your SwimTrek group anywhere other than the airport at the start of your trip. Therefore, it is critical that your travel plans are arranged to ensure that you arrive at Malé International Airport in time for the 11:00 am start on Day 1.

### Leaving the Maldives

At the end of your trip, you will be transferred from our boat back to Malé International Airport between 09:00, depending on your outbound flight time or your onwards travel plans.

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## PRACTICAL INFORMATION

### Accommodation

Our accommodation over the course of your trip is on board MV Sharifa, a mid range Maldives liveaboard vessel. There are six twin/double cabins on the lower deck with a double bed below and single above. The two double cabins on the upper deck have one bed. All cabins have air conditioning and are en suite bathroom. There are a limited number of cabins available for single occupancy or non-swimmers, which can be reserved during the booking process, subject to availability. MV Sharifa also features large communal lounge areas and several sun decks which are the perfect place to relax between swims or to watch the sun go down at the end of each day.

### Pre/Post Trip Accommodation and Trip Extension Options

If you would like to extend your trip, our agent in the Maldives, Secret Paradise, can organise accommodation before or after your SwimTrek tour. This will ensure that you will be offered better rates than what are available online, you will be staying in locally-recommended properties and someone from Secret Paradise will meet you at the airport and arrange the transfer to your hotel as part of your booking. Please email [sales@secretparadise.mv](mailto:sales@secretparadise.mv) for additional accommodation and transport advice to meet your SwimTrek transfer.

Any trip extension options? Going on a consecutive trip after current trip finishes?

### Food and Drink

Breakfast, lunch, dinner and after-swim snacks are included as part of your package and are prepared on board by our very own chef. Menus include a mix of freshly prepared international and local specialities. Our chefs who will do their best to accommodate special dietary requirements, however, if you have any strict dietary restrictions/requirements, please contact the SwimTrek office prior to booking.





The traditional food of the Maldivians is based around fish (tuna), chilli and coconuts. White rice and 'roshi' (a flour based flat-bread) are staple items. Fish is normally smoked, fired, barbequed or roasted. Pork products are strictly prohibited. Typical ingredients used widely in dishes and served on board include onion, ginger, garlic, lemon and spices.

Drinking water is included. To avoid generating waste plastic Sharifa has a water dispenser, guests will need to bring a water bottle. Soft drinks, wine, beer and spirits can be purchased on board our vessel, with an individual tab to be set up for each guest at the start of your trip. Your tab must be settled prior to the end of your trip and can be paid in either US Dollars or the local currency, MVR. As a guide, soft drinks are priced from US\$2.50, beers from US\$4.00, wine from US\$8.00 and 300ml bottles of spirits from US\$35.00. Please note that these prices exclude a 12% government tax which will be added to your final bill.

Please note that, although alcoholic drinks are available for purchase on board our vessel and on 'Resorts Islands' (*not including 'local islands'*), it is strictly prohibited, by law, to bring alcohol into the Maldives or to take it off your liveaboard onto a 'local island'.

When taking on-shore trips to local islands, it is worth noting that Maldivians traditionally eat with their fingers and, therefore, food is not always served 'piping hot'. Tap water is perfectly safe for brushing your teeth, however, we advise to drink bottled or boiled water. All food on local islands is halal.

### Extra Activities

Throughout the course of your trip, you will have the opportunity to take part in a number of extra activities before or after our organised daily swims. These activities include snorkelling, scuba diving (extra cost\*), night fishing, local island visit with afternoon tea and a sightseeing visit to Malé. Participation in these activities is optional and does not need to be booked in advance.

**Scuba Diving:** During this trip, it is possible to take part in an introductory or a standard dive from one of the many islands we visit. The approximate rates are:

- US\$65-\$85 per dive, including equipment
- US\$65-\$105 per night dive, including equipment
- US\$80-\$135 per person for an introductory Discover Scuba Dive, including equipment

If you intend to participate in scuba diving (other than the Discover Scuba Dive), you must be a qualified diver in possession of a dive certification card and log book.

### Money, Extra Expenses and Tipping

The US dollar is accepted as legal tender throughout the Maldives, however, the country also has a local currency, Maldivian Rufiyaa (MVR), which is non-convertible and cannot be purchased before your



arrival in the Maldives. It is possible to change most major currencies for Maldivian Rufiyaa (MVR) at Malé International Airport upon arrival.

On board MV Sharifa and on smaller local islands, credit cards are not accepted, so cash is the only payment option. If you make a payment in US Dollars, change will usually be given in the local currency. All major credit cards can be used (and are preferred) at major resorts, hotels, shops, etc.

ATMs are available in Malé and at the airport but not on the islands we visit. Please note that ATMs only dispense cash in the local currency (MVR), **not** in US Dollars.

As all of your meals and accommodation are included in your package price and you will be spending most of your time on board our liveaboard vessel, extra expenses throughout the duration of your trip will be limited. However, you should bring extra money with you to cover items such as additional drinks, souvenirs and optional island resort visits or extra activities.

Tipping is considered to be part of the culture in the Maldives and while not compulsory, it is advised that you budget \$10-20 per day for tipping at your own discretion.

### Passports and Visas

You do not need to apply for a visa before you travel to the Maldives. All tourists, of all nationalities, can receive a 30-day visa free of charge on arrival in the Maldives.

To receive a tourist visa on arrival at Malé International Airport, you will need the following items:

- A valid passport with at least six months validity beyond the expected length of stay
- A return flight ticket, or a flight ticket to another destination, for departure within 30 days of arrival
- Either confirmation of a hotel/resort booking, or evidence of sufficient funds to cover your expenses in Maldives (at least US\$100 + US\$50 per day demonstrated by cash or bank statement)

For further information about passport and visa requirements, please visit the [Maldives High Commission](#) website.

### Travel Insurance

We consider comprehensive travel insurance to be essential, and we strongly recommend that you purchase insurance which includes, but is not limited to, cover for illness, accident, emergency repatriation, ambulance, air ambulance, helicopter rescue services, cancellation, lost luggage and delays. Your travel insurance should also cover you for open water swimming and any other activity listed in your trip itinerary (including races and competitions, where applicable). Please read your policy details carefully and remember to take them with you on your trip for your own reference. For further information about travel insurance, please visit: [www.swimtrek.com/travel-insurance](http://www.swimtrek.com/travel-insurance).



## Health Information and Recommended Vaccinations

For comprehensive health information for people travelling to The Maldives, including all recommended and required vaccinations, please visit [www.travelhealthpro.org.uk/countries](http://www.travelhealthpro.org.uk/countries). Please note that this information is subject to change and you should re-check this site regularly prior to your trip.

UK health authorities have classified the Maldives as having a moderate risk of Zika virus transmission. For further information about this assessment, you should visit [www.gov.uk/guidance/zika-virus-country-specific-risk](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/zika-virus-country-specific-risk) and follow the advice on the [www.travelhealthpro.org.uk](http://www.travelhealthpro.org.uk). It is also recommended that you discuss your travel plans with your healthcare provider, particularly if you're pregnant or planning to become pregnant.

## Internet Access, Electricity and Travel Plugs

Please note that there is very limited access to WiFi during your time on MV Sharifa (via a shared 4G modem). Should you need access to the internet during your trip, please ensure that you get your phone unlocked before your trip (or bring your own personal dongle) and that you purchase a SIM card from the airport on your arrival. If you purchase a SIM card with a 3G or 4G data plan, you should be able to access the internet for the majority of the trip (subject to your data allowance limits).

The power points on our liveboard vessel use the standard 3-pin UK plugs (type G), however, please be aware that some hotels in the Maldives use alternative plug types. If you are staying in the Maldives before or after your SwimTrek trip, please contact your accommodation to enquire about this.

All electrical devices running on 110/120V must have power converters / step-up transformers.

For a useful source of information on the different electrical outlets, electrical plugs, and electric sockets, please visit [www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plug-voltage-by-country/](http://www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plug-voltage-by-country/).

## Other Information

If there is any further information that you require before your trip, or if you have any questions whatsoever, please don't hesitate to get in touch with us using the contact details at the bottom of these Trip Notes.

Happy swimming!