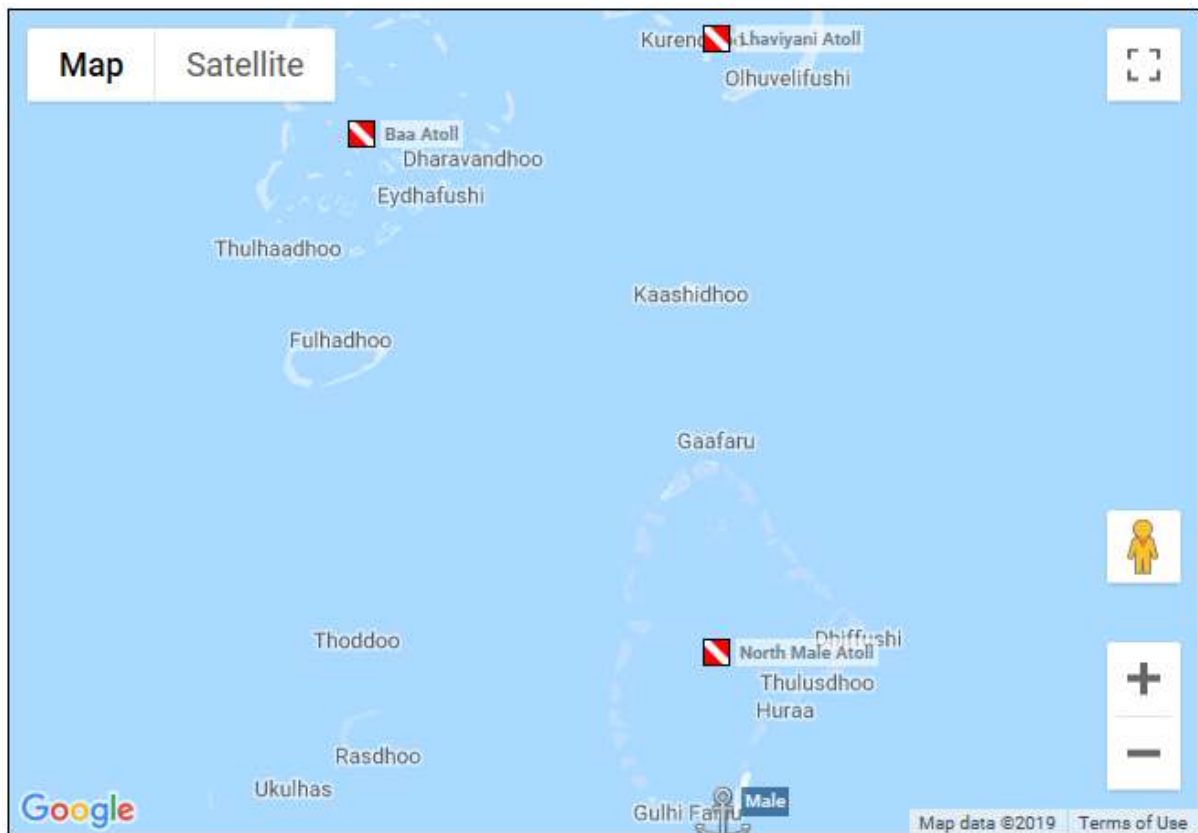


Hanifaru & North (July - October)

7 days

You don't need a minimum number of dives but you should be comfortable with drift dives. Currents can be strong. All your diving is made from dhonis to give precise entry and exit points. Experienced divers can dive in a buddy pair unguided.



- [Baa Atoll](#): Hanifaru Bay and Nelivaru Thila, Dhiggu Thila and many more
- [North Male Atoll](#): Beautiful Pinnacles, Lankan Manta Point
- [Lhaviyani Atoll](#): Fushivaru Thila, Kuredu Express, and Kuredu Caves

This itinerary runs around the New Moon phase when tidal ranges are greater resulting in a greater flow of plankton into the world famous Hanifaru Bay, where the massive majestic mantas venture in for a feeding frenzy between July and October each year.

We sail from Male to the northern atolls of Lhaviyani and Baa (Hanifaru Bay) and back taking in the renowned sites of Kuredu Express, Kuredu Caves.

As well as mantas, you can get close to turtles, grey reef sharks and whitetip reef sharks. One of the big attractions is the chance to encounter mantas feeding and cleaning.

Thanks to the currents that sweep plankton into the shallow lagoons, mantas follow in vast numbers to feed. Although diving is not permitted in the UNESCO World Heritage site of Hanifaru Bay, we are allowed to go in and snorkel with these gentle giants in the lagoon. After a manta has had its feed it needs to get cleaned, so we will take you to known manta cleaning stations in both North Male, Lhaviyani and Baa Atoll. So hopefully these will give you sightings all week long. Of course, sightings can't be guaranteed but diving at this time means your chances are high.

Baa Atoll

Baa Atoll was designated as a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve in June 2011. It harbors globally significant biodiversity in its numerous reefs and demonstrates a long history of human interaction with the environment. Covering approximately 139,700 ha of coastal/marine areas, the site is representative of the Maldives' high diversity of reef animals, with stony and soft corals, reef associated fish species, marine turtles, manta rays and whale sharks.

Here are some possible sites you may visit:

- **Hanifaru Bay** - The famous Hanifaru Bay, which is known locally as Vandhumaafaru Adi, is thought to be one of the few places in the world where whale sharks congregate in to mate, although recent research suggests otherwise with the vast majority of the whale sharks seen there being young males. The bay also regularly sees some of the largest gatherings of Manta rays worldwide with up to one hundred individuals in the small inlet when the tide pushes plankton into the bay.
- **Nelivaru Thila** - With high chances of spotting Manta rays, especially during rising tides. The Thila (pinnacle) has several overhangs, with the most interesting parts are the west, east and south sides where you may encounter ghost pipefish, stingrays and Manta rays.
- **Dhigu Thila** - Dhigu in the Maldivian language means Long and Thila means pinnacle, and that is exactly what this dive site is, a long thin pinnacle in Baa Atoll, starting at 6m and descending down to 30m. Between 12 and 25m there are some interesting overhangs with some soft coral and Gorgonian Fan coral. Look out for Leaf Fish, Frog Fish and Stonefish, as well as nudibranchs, white tip reef sharks and perhaps the odd Manta passing in its way to it from Hanifaru Bay.

North Male Atoll

North Male Atoll is one of the most developed atolls in terms of hotel and resort development. There are at least 20 resort islands operating in the North Male Atoll. It is also home to some excellent diving spots.

Here are some possible sites you may visit:

- **Lankan Manta Point** - Lying along the channel reef of Lankanfushi (now Paradise Island Resort), this large block of coral is home to hundreds of cleaner wrasse. During the south west monsoon (May to November) the current runs from west to east, so the mantas

feed on the outside of the eastern side of the Atolls. After they have had a feed, they come into cleaning stations such as Lankan Manta Point and get cleaned by the cleaner wrasse; a perfect chance for divers to get up close and personal with these majestic mantas.

- **Banana Reef** was the first dive site to be discovered in the Maldives continues to be one of the most popular. The dive, which ranges in depth from 5 to 30 meters, has several interesting characteristics including a pinnacle and some overhangs. Coral formations here are prolific and colorful, attracting an extensive variety of fish, including squirrelfish, bannerfish and oriental sweetlips. Currents can be strong at times around the reef, with occasional turbulence occurring around the overhangs. As such, the use of a surface balloon is recommended.
- **Kuda Haa** is a dramatic pinnacle, or thila, dive, which is widely considered one of the highlights of diving in the Maldives. Diving at Kuda Haa is at its best when the currents are not strong, when it is easy to navigate between the two parts of the pinnacle. Marine life to be expected at Kuda Haa is diverse and plentiful, including many macro species, including nudibranchs, flatworms, leaf fish and frogfish.

Lhaviyani Atoll

Lhaviyani (or Faadhippolhu) Atoll is situated 120km north of Male and is relatively undeveloped with just 5 of its 58 islands dedicated to resorts. The diving here is famed for its thrilling channels, walls and reefs teeming with a myriad of marine life.

Here are some possible sites you may visit:

- **Kuredu Express** - This famous dive site gets its name from the strong currents that flow through the channel here. Reef terraces provide shelter to watch the grey reef sharks, tuna, eagle rays, sting rays, napoleons, schools of jack fish and barracuda that come to swim in the currents. Large bays in the outreef are scattered with soft corals, schools of humpback snappers and collared butterfly fish.
- **Kuredu Caves** - Famed for its overhangs starting at 8 metres and dropping down to 20 metres, this site is also known locally as 'Turtle Airport' due to the large numbers of resident green sea turtles. Soft corals covered in soldier fish coat the ceilings of the overhangs which are also home to lion fish, porcupine fish, leaf fish, scorpion fish and moray eels to name a few! The deeper ledges give an opportunity to hang with sting rays and huge napoleons.
- **Fushivaru Thila** - Fushivaru is described as one of the best diving areas in the Lhaviyani Atoll for its abundance and diversity, such as a manta cleaning station, grey reef shark sightings, interesting small cave formations and colourful unspoilt reefs. Fushivaru Thila is a protected area and a channel where you can find a large plateau covered by blocks of corals, which hosts a Manta rays cleaning station. In the central part of the pinnacle at around 15 meters, Mantas often swim by the blocks and you will have more chances to spot them during the outgoing current.