



Maldives

Find your very own paradise with our top choices

1. ANANTARA DHIGU, SOUTH MALE ATOLL

The best bits: Linked to two other islands – down-to-earth Anantara Veli and ultra-exclusive Naladhu – Dhigu is part of a little island village, so there's no chance of the same-restaurant-every-night claustrophobia of some other resorts. In fact, there are six places to eat (the Thai, Baan Huraa, is the best), plus a handful of tropical cocktail bars, and the extra space means paradise never feels over-populated. As well as the overwater (spa) and underwater (dive) action you'd expect, this is one of the few places in the Maldives with a surf school.

The worst bit: You'll feel slightly like the poor neighbour with super-luxe Naladhu behind a locked gate. But just think how many trips to the spa that price difference adds up to.

Get me there: Kenwood Travel (020 7749 9220, www.kenwoodtravel.com) has seven nights from £1,717pp, B&B, including flights from Heathrow and speedboat transfers.

2. BANYAN TREE MADIVARU, NORTH ARI ATOLL

The best bits: The Maldives should be about getting away from it all, but at some of the all-singing, all-dancing resorts that can be hard to do. Not at Madivaru. There are only six villas on the island (each consists of three vast tents, an outside deck and pool), and they're so fabulous that most people just hole up and hide out, leaving the white-sand beaches blissfully empty. There's

24-hour butler service, huge lobsters and perfectly-grilled fish for dinner, fresh from the unspoiled reefs. It's romantic and luxurious without being try-hard – not easy to pull off.

The worst bit: Paradise doesn't come cheap. **Get me there:** Abercrombie & Kent (0845 618 2202, www.abercrombiekent.co.uk) has seven nights from £4,895pp, all-inclusive, including flights from Gatwick and seaplane transfers.

3. REETHI BEACH RESORT, BAA ATOLL

The best bits: Only 15 per cent of the island is developed, so Reethi feels low-key and natural, with the 110 thatched villas set into lush landscaping and featuring a cheery lime and raspberry decor. The overwater rooms may be the most prized, but those on the beach have pretty little gardens and closer access to the excellent reef. There's a dinky spa, tennis, badminton and squash courts, and five restaurants, including one on the beach.

The worst bit: The bathrooms are pretty old-fashioned, although the fact that they are partly alfresco offsets that disappointment.

Get me there: Kuoni (01306 747008, www.kuoni.co.uk) has seven nights from £1,477pp, B&B, including flights from Gatwick and transfers.

4. CHAAYA ISLAND DHONVELI, NORTH MALE ATOLL

The best bits: This value-for-money all-inclusive is just a 13km speedboat ride from Male. Forego the





overwater suites for a perfectly-pleasant garden room in oriental-inspired shades, and you'll get a genuine bargain. The plush spa belies the price tag too, with treatments using divine Pevonia Botanica products, and there's an open-air buffet that serves an excellent Maldivian fish curry under the requisite thatched roof. But the long, white-sand beach is the biggest pull here, equipped with wave-shaped sunloungers. Sporty sorts will be pleased to hear this is a renowned surf spot.

The worst bit: The slightly naff disco and cultural shows remind you this is not a five-star.

Get me there: *First Choice* (0871 200 7799, www.firstchoice.co.uk) has seven nights from £1,290pp, all-inclusive, including flights from Gatwick and transfers.

5. SONEVA GILI BY SIX SENSES, NORTH MALE ATOLL

★❤️🔥 **The best bits:** This 45-villa playground stands out mainly for its seven Crusoe Residences, which

pose on stilts in a semi-circle, out in the lagoon. No jetties – you either swim to breakfast (fun the first time) or dial up a quick boat transfer (better). A really rare isolation is assured on the clay-soft white sands that ring the resort, and the service, like the breezy spa and the food, is tricky to fault. You may prefer the simplicity of sushi (the resort fishermen land yellow-fin, bonito, etc, the morning of the night you fancy dining on it) to the offerings in the Gourmet Cellar: cured meats and cheeses, for instance, all the way from Spain.

The worst bit: From the outside, those pricey Crusoe Residences aren't *that* attractive. They're slightly lashed-together-looking, as if knocked up for survivors of a swamped world; highly novel once you're holed up, all the same, with 'water gardens' accessed down ladders.

Get me there: *Carrier* (0161 492 1358, www.carrier.co.uk) has seven nights from £3,280pp, B&B, including flights and private transfers.

6. KURAMATHI, RASDHOO ATOLL

👨👩👧👦🇸🇰❤️ **The best bits:** Picking the prettiest isle in the Maldives is a bit like choosing between the genetically-blessed Olsen twins. But if you had to choose one island, Kuramathi, with its long tail of white sandbank, would be up there. As it's larger than most, it doesn't suffer from honeymoonitis, attracting families, couples, divers and spa-seekers in equal measure. The Kuramathi spa is huge, and even the cheapest of the 290 villas have king-size beds and sunloungers. But the diving is the real standout, with two PADI schools, a house wreck, and one of the only spots in the Maldives where you can see hammerhead sharks.

The worst bit: A lack of sunloungers around the pool – and none on the beach.

Get me there: *Travel Designers* (020 7720 8484, www.traveldesigners.co.uk) has seven nights from £1,297pp, full board, including flights from Heathrow and group transfers. >