

# Romance guaranteed

Wedding editor Catherine Westwood, new husband Sergio and daughter Bee headed for a back-to-nature honeymoon on far-flung Kuramathi in the Maldives



**T**he Maldives has always appealed to us, boasting year-round warm weather, direct flights and

wonderful beaches. As we were accompanied by our 20-month-old daughter Bee, we also wanted a resort to keep her busy without feeling like we were honeymooning at a kids' club. Our research led us to Kuramathi, which also included all the romantic trappings needed for holiday bliss.

## Flight of fancy

After a 10-hour flight from London to Malé, we hopped on a tiny, 14-seat plane for the half-hour trip to our final destination. The plane was cramped and hot, but soon after take-off we were soaring above the Maldivian atolls and any discomfort was forgotten. These tiny, irregular-shaped coral islands stand out like jewels in the turquoise sea and look stunning from the air.

We landed on a floating wooden pontoon in the middle of the sea and, minutes later, a large passenger boat moored alongside us. The captain cheerfully loaded our bags onto the vessel and after 10 minutes of sailing, Kuramathi appeared on the horizon.

## Beachfront bliss

Our curious toddler meant the resort's stunning over-water bungalows with direct access to the sea weren't an option. But our beachfront villa, near the restaurants, swimming pool and kids' club, was ideal. The modern structure had a palm-thatched roof, tiled floors and outdoor shower, together with a shady decked area with daybeds and loungers to relax on. Bee turned up her nose at the cot provided, so it was the four-poster bed for all three of us – it was never going to be a 'traditional' honeymoon!

## Island life

Our villa was in the centre of Kuramathi, yet with all the lush vegetation around us, we

often felt like the only ones on the island. To leave our desert-island idyll, we either walked along the beachfront or jumped on the tiny shuttle coach along the island's small interior road to one of the nearest restaurants. The Palm was our favourite, with its ultra-modern design and indulgent cuisine. Set on powder-soft sand and shaded by swaying palms, we watched swooping fruit bats and tiny hermit crabs scuttling about as we tucked in to delicious fresh seafood, succulent steaks, fresh salads and chunky chips.

## The big chill

The pleasant island breeze meant the sea could be choppy, which wasn't ideal for Bee to paddle in. Fortunately, the smaller of the island's two pools was ideal, and was great for meeting other kids to play with, plus it gave us a chance to relax as we took turns looking after her. It also meant we didn't have to spoil the romantic ambience of the main infinity pool, which was perfect for loved-up honeymooners.

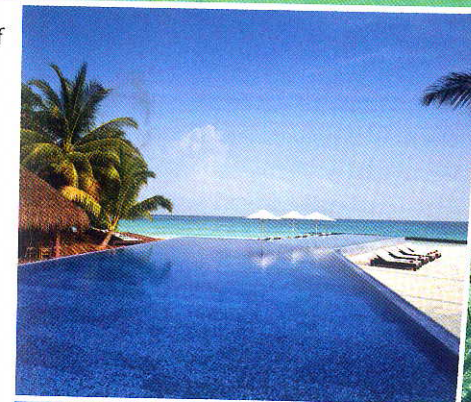
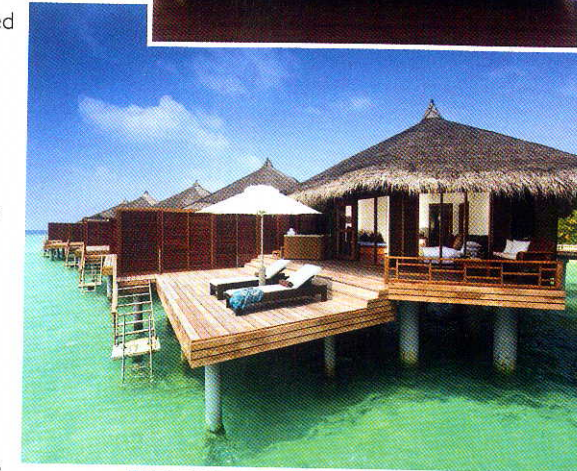
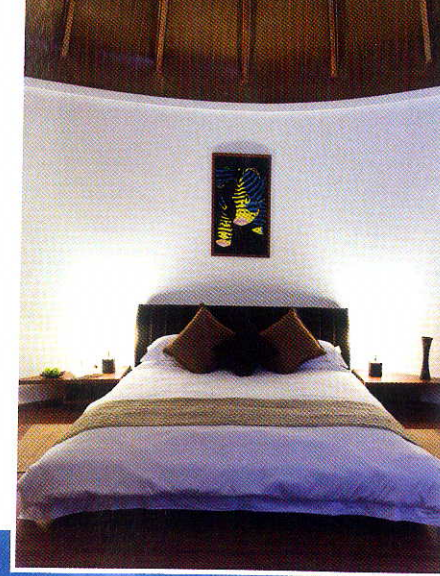
For a truly decadent honeymoon treat, Sergio and I also took it in turns to have a massage at the island spa, which stands on stilts over the ocean. We both had our own unforgettable moment of peace, sitting in the spa's chill-out area, mesmerised by the endless horizon and rustling palms.

## Natural wonders

Being so close to nature was very special for all of us. Bee especially loved the tiny crabs, lizards and ocean fish. The tropical trees, plants and flowers fascinated her, and the evening feeding of the stingrays was always the highlight of the day. We spent lots of time buried in the velvety sand, and we all had fun making sandcastles and playing in the warm water. It really was the epitome of an idyllic holiday for us all. **M**

## Book it!

Kuoni (01306 747002, [www.kuoni.co.uk](http://www.kuoni.co.uk)) offers seven nights full board in a Garden Villa at Kuramathi from £1,530 per person, based on two sharing. Price includes flights with British Airlines from Gatwick, transfers and access to the VIP lounge at Malé airport on departure.



## Our holiday tips

**1** We were very lucky with the weather, as it had rained solidly for three weeks before our arrival. We travelled at the end of the south-west monsoon season, when there's always a risk of wet weather. The driest time to visit the Maldives is from November to April.

**2** Bring a big hat and plenty of factor 50 suncream – any less and you will burn immediately. Also pack plenty of light cotton and linen clothes. The mercury soars to 30°C during the day and drops to only 25°C at night.

**3** The resort's shops sell very little, so bring any medicines, food or special items you want for your stay, including plenty of mosquito repellent.

