

SCUBA DIVING ON KURAMATHI

Spectacular marine life, vibrant reefs, warm waters and big fish encounters make Kuramathi a diving destination not to be missed. Add this to the wonderful natural island beauty, comfortable accommodation and an excellent range of facilities and you have the perfect location for your diving holiday!

Rasdhoo Divers operates two dive schools on the island (both affiliated PADI Gold Palm/SSI facility/Barakuda/CMAS) so you are never more than a few minutes walk from the wonders of the Indian Ocean. Under the Anglo-Austrian management of Instructor trainers, Matt Berry and Helmuth Steuber since 1994, our experienced, multi-lingual dive team provides a friendly and professional service to our guests. Our enthusiastic instructors will inspire beginners to discover this extraordinary liquid world while experienced divers will find challenging dives with many types of sharks, mantas, turtles, rays, napoleons, barracuda and tuna as well the smaller, but no less interesting inhabitants of the reef such as frogfish, ghost pipefish and leaf fish.

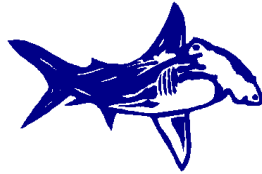
Kuramathi is an ideal place to learn to dive with warm water (29c), good visibility, a shallow lagoon for training on one side of the island and stunning reefs teeming with marine life on the other. Each year these near perfect conditions help us to introduce many guests to this incredible world. So if you have watched the breathtaking images of National Geographic or the Blue Planet with divers seemingly suspended in a blue void, surrounded by thousands of shimmering fish pulsating with the energy of a vast ocean and thought, "Wow that looks like an amazing world and I want to explore it too!" Now is your chance. Don't be intimidated even if you are apprehensive – being a little nervous is totally normal – just stop by and try it. Our "cool, calm and collected" professional instructor team will guide you through the first steps and do everything to help you have an excellent first diving experience.

Kuramathi is also blessed by having world-famous Hammerhead Shark Point a mere eight minutes away by boat – one of the few remaining places in the world where you can still see these magnificent creatures.

Comfort and convenience for diving guests is assured with fast, modern dive boats that reach more than 20 spectacular local dive sites in an average boat ride of just 15 minutes. Our local trips are supplemented by twice weekly full day safaris and half day trips to dive some of the best sites in neighbouring North Ari atoll.

Our knowledgeable team is complemented by the resident marine biologist divemaster and the Eco Centre (complete with whale skeleton!) where you can find out everything you wish to know about marine life. We also provide nitrox for free to offer divers that extra safety margin and we are well-supported by the Kuramathi Medical Centre and Hyperbaric Chamber.





FACILITIES

Rasdhoo Divers has two locations on the island so wherever your villa is situated, you will never be more than a few steps away from your threshold to underwater adventure. One school is located in the middle of the island on Athiri jetty and the second (Main) near the arrival jetty between the Eco Centre and Medical Centre. You can easily find both by checking out the island map. Guests are welcome to use either or both schools to suit their preference or schedule and can therefore benefit from a wider choice of programs and dive sites on any given day. In addition, having the two locations means that we have the chance to get to know you better so we can ensure you have a great time diving here!

We mainly use Scubapro dive equipment with Suunto dive computers, while our compressors are Bauer and NRC for nitrox. The diving boats are comfortable, spacious, 15 meter, purpose – built, modern, fiberglass diving dhonis with freshwater shower, toilet and safety equipment onboard. They are also fast which allows us to access many great dive sites in neighbouring Ari atoll on half and full day trips.

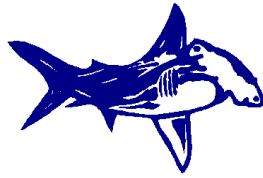
In addition, we are fortunate to have the Kuramathi Medical Centre and Hyperbaric chamber (largest in the Maldives) on the island which is manned by a European diving physician and GP – just for peace of mind.

SAFETY

Your safety while enjoying your diving with us is paramount. Our safety system focuses on the prevention of incidents, but in the rare event that an emergency situation arises, we have the procedures, equipment and training to provide an immediate response and facilitate a favorable resolution.

Our Emergency First Responder dive staff onboard are supported by a 24/7 on call European Diving Physician plus a GP on the island. DAN twin cylinder oxygen kits and DAN First Aid kits provide immediate assistance. Kuramathi Medical Centre and Hyperbaric chamber provide further treatment if/when required. However, prevention is the key and we promote sensible practices to minimize potential problems. Nitrox is provided free of charge and we encourage all divers to make the small investment to become nitrox certified.





ADVANCED COURSES – Deeper into diving

NITROX COURSES

Do you think nitrox is some strange gas for hard core technical divers who dive to deep into the abyss? In fact, nothing could be further from the truth. Nitrox is simply enriched air – i.e. more oxygen, less nitrogen and therefore you have the advantage of extended no decompression time. This provides great safety advantages for every diver and this is one reason why we now offer combination Open Water Diver + Nitrox and Advanced + Nitrox courses. **(Combine your Nitrox course within your Advanced or Open Water course add from just US\$170 + 6% GST)**

In addition, for some dives it is very rewarding to use some of that extra no deco. time to stay a bit longer at depth (i.e. especially on the Hammerhead dive).

Still unclear about nitrox and its advantages? – then please just stop by one of the schools and we can explain it in two minutes. We offer several nitrox course options which are very straightforward and good value. **Theory duration: 1-1.5 hours @ 17.30; Price: From US\$210 (+6% GST) including certification and instruction.**

THE ADVANCED COURSE

Do you already have your Open Water Diver certificate, but would like the freedom to dive a bit deeper (i.e. do the Hammerhead Shark dive) or are you interested in learning a bit more about a special area of diving such as night diving, underwater photography, our amazing marine life or keen to improve your buoyancy and air consumption? The Advanced course is just five dives and is a lot of fun with minimal theory. **Duration: min. two days; Price: US\$490 (+6% GST) including five dives, certification, student materials and instruction.**

REFRESHER COURSE

Already done a diving certification course, but life has been busy lately and you have not dived for year or two (or even more)? No problem. We do regular refresher courses for people just like you where we ease you back into diving with a few of the basic exercises and a nice, shallow dive in a beautiful ocean. **Duration: Approx. 2 hours; Price: US\$80 (+ 6% GST) with your equipment; US\$100 + 6% GST) with ours.**

SPECIALTY COURSES

We offer a wide range of specialties so you can learn more about a specific area of diving that may particularly appeal to you. A few great specialties especially for the Maldivian environment are: Enriched Air Nitrox, Digital Underwater Photography, Drift, Fish ID, Underwater Naturalist, plus many others such as Wreck, Night and Deep. **Duration:** Specialty courses include two to four dives depending on the individual specialty. **Price:** US\$75 (+6% GST) per specialty dive plus US\$150 (+6% GST) certification fee – includes required student materials, instruction and certification

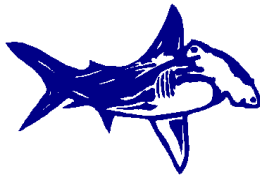
RESCUE DIVER COURSE (on request)

A challenging and rewarding course, but still great fun. Increase your confidence as a diver, improve your awareness about the diving environment and gain some experience in emergency management and prevention. **Duration:** min. three days; **Price:** US\$550 (+6% GST) including instruction, certification and student materials.

DIVEMASTER COURSE (on request)

Dreaming about leaving the office and swapping your business suit for a wetsuit, then the divemaster course is an excellent choice and your first step to becoming a dive professional! **Duration:** min. two weeks; Please enquire for prices and availability.





JUST DIVING

(All prices are in US\$ and are subject to an additional 6% GST)

Dive prices (per dive)	10l tank & weights	Full Equipment
Single dive	55	76
5 to 9 dives	52	72
10 to 14 dives	48	66
The Divers Dozen (12 dives/6 consecutive days)	45	61
15 to 19 dives	43	58
20 or more dives	42	56

Boat fees (per person)

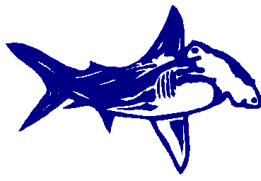
Beginner course dive	5
One dive a day	12
Two dives a day	17
Three dives a day	22
Half Day Safari to Ari atoll with breakfast	25
Full Day Safari to Ari atoll with breakfast & lunch	40

Equipment Rental & extras (per dive)

One rental item from BCD jacket, Regulator set, Dive computer, Shorty	8
One rental item (5 dives or more)	7
One rental item (10 dives or more)	6
12 liter	4
15 liter (nitrox only)	6
Night dive supplement	6
Kowalski torch plus strobe with back-up	10
UW digital camera	45
Strobe for the above	30

All prices are in US\$ and are subject to change without prior notice





OUR DIVE PROGRAM AND OUR DIVE SITES

We offer a wide variety of dive trips and dive sites to suit all abilities and levels. Please read on for our typical schedule and general information:

- 5.45 am (!) Hammerhead Shark Point dive – at least four times weekly
- 9.00 – Morning dive
- 14.00 – Afternoon dive
- 17.45 – Night dive – at least four times weekly
- 6.00 am (!) – Half day or Full day two or three dive safari to North Ari atoll – three times weekly
- 8.00 – Once or twice a week we will schedule a single dive to one of the nearer North Ari sites such as Maaya Thila, Hafza Thila, Whale shark Point (if the big boys are there) and leave a bit earlier for the longer trip.
- In addition: unguided house reef diving for those with min. the Advanced certificate and 50 logged dives (if conditions suitable);

Rasdhoo Atoll is a comparatively small atoll and we almost always dive on the outside reef which means we have deep water (+-160m) and this attracts many pelagic species. We have **different types of dive sites** which vary between channels, walls, reefs and thilas. We even have **three wrecks** (40m, 34m and 7m long) in the atoll, the first of which we dive regularly (as a night dive). Drift diving with the current along the outside wall of the atoll is usually easy while channel dives can have more current and are more challenging. (Please find more information about some of our 20 local sites at the end of this section.)

The **fish life** here in Rasdhoo Atoll is diverse and abundant. You can see several different types of sharks here, eagle rays, sting rays, manta rays (our manta season is really Nov-Apr), turtles (green and hawksbill), barracuda, tuna, napoleons, schools of trevally, groupers, morays, leaf fish, frogfish, ghost pipefish, ribbon eels and much more. Very occasionally we can see the elusive whale shark in Rasdhoo Atoll, but we have recently discovered an amazing whale shark area in Ari (short season only!) which is within easy range of our half day or full day trips to Ari.

Hammerhead Shark Point is naturally a great attraction and only 8 minutes by boat from Kuramathi. Hammerheads can be seen all year round and there is no special season for them. It is possible to dive this point four times a week if you like the early mornings (5.45am)! It is a spectacular dive for Advanced divers. **Price: Normal dive price**

Our **dive safaris to North Ari atoll** on Saturdays, Mondays and Thursdays (minimum 6 divers for half day and 10 divers for full day) are not to be missed! We make two or three dives on some of the famous sites there. Breakfast (and lunch on full day) onboard are included in boat fee. With the right conditions, this is a wonderful diving adventure and memorable day out on the magnificent Indian Ocean. We often select two or three sites from: Maaya Thila, Hafza Thila, Dega Thila, Hohola Thila, Kandholhudhoo Thila, Fishhead, Malhoss Thila, Donkalo Thila, Gangehi Pass, Malhoss Bodu Thila (amazing manta point in season), Bathala Maaga Kanthila, Bathala Thila, Kandholhu house reef, Panettone, Himendhoo Thila, Fesdu Wreck, Orimas Thila, Moofushi Kandu, etc. We leave at 6.00 and return around 13.00 for the half day and at 17.30 for the full day. Nitrox is highly recommended and of great benefit on safari. **Price: Normal dive prices and US\$25 (+6% GST) boat fee with Breakfast and US\$40 (+6% GST) with breakfast and Lunch included.**

Divers can dive unguided with their buddy on **the house reef**, but we specify that they have at least the Advanced certificate and 50 logged dives, as there is only one and the same entry/exit point and it is not always an easy dive!

Night diving is available on a 40 m long wreck or on the house reef at least four times a week. Night diving cannot be done unguided.

If you are concerned (or fascinated) about **sharks**, you will see sharks here and even juvenile black-tip reef sharks directly off the beach, but we do not have great whites! Divers will see sharks on most dives with frequent sightings of white-tips, black-tips, grey reef sharks and hammerheads, but leopard sharks, nurse sharks and silvertips can also be spotted. Many visitors, including some divers, are uneasy about sharks, but usually recognize from observing their behaviour that they are quite wary of us. Most divers find the experience of seeing sharks a fascinating encounter and one of the highlights of their diving adventure here. None of us working here has ever experienced or seen a shark attack and between us we have more than 25,000 dives!

So whether you are a beginner, a young diver, an experienced diver or someone who used to dive and wants to start again, we hope we have convinced you to come and dive with us and experience the beauty and adventure of diving in the Maldives with the Rasdhoo Divers team!



MORE INFO. ON SOME OF OUR DIVE SITES:

Manta Block is a manta cleaning station inside North Channel; the past couple of years during the manta season (November to April) we have always found mantas being cleaned on this large single coral block. The bottom here lies at just 13 meters, but provides for spectacular close encounters with large rays and is a favourite of many divers irrespective of experience level. We often have current here as even though the block lies deep inside the channel, at this relatively shallow depth the water movement is still notable.

Madivaru is a spectacular dive site due to both the topography of the reef and the marine life inhabiting it. This horseshoe-shaped reef structure lies next to the uninhabited island of Madivaru and the island wall makes up part of the divesite rising to a few meters below the surface. The top of the outer reef lies between 15 and 22 meters and at depth features overhangs and promontories. Healthy corals are plentiful and a large sand patch at 26m is a central feature of the dive site. Madivaru is always a great dive, some dives are just more breathtaking than others. Here we can often find a school of grey reef sharks, large dogtooth tunas, schools of eagle rays and mobulas, large schools of trevally and jacks, white tip reef sharks, sting rays, a school of barracuda, mantas in season, napoleons and turtles. Very occasionally we also have dolphins sucking garden eels out of the sand like spaghetti, the odd guitar shark, a few scalloped hammerheads or a lone great hammerhead, a few silvertips and almost anything else you can think of big or small that lives underwater in the Maldives! It rarely disappoints even with poor visibility or on "quiet" days.

HAMMERHEADS !! – diving with Hammerhead sharks is our speciality! World famous **Hammerhead Shark Point** is situated a mere five minutes boat ride from Kuramathi, and we make this Advanced dive at least four times a week. It is one of the few remaining places left in the world where you can still see these magnificent animals.

Nevertheless, you still have to get up early if you want to dive with the hammerheads. The best time is around sunrise which means about 6.00 am! It's a spectacular dive and there is something special about jumping into the 29C water in the soft light of dawn and letting yourself descend 30 meters into the blue. The sparkling blue plankton lights our path and the surgeonfish accompany us as we hover in the deep waiting for the hammerheads (up to 4 meters long) to appear from the depths.

If you see a large hammerhead up close and personal, the image will probably remain with you long after your holiday is over. Even if you are unlucky and the hammerheads decide not to show, most divers still find this dive a fascinating experience.

Rasdhoo Channel is a big scenery, big fish, advanced channel crossing between Kuramathi and the neighboring local island of Rasdhoo. An excellent dive with the right conditions – ideally with medium current pushing mainly across and slightly in – to provide good visibility and an easy passage drifting from one thila to the next. These thilas are huge coral blocks which are mounted on the 30 meter sandy bottom of the channels outer edge before it drops into the open ocean and a depth of almost 200 meters. The top side of these large thilas is found between 22 and 27 meters so it is a deep dive and a great dive on nitrox. Rasdhoo Channel often features grey reef sharks, white tips, stingrays, napoleons, turtles, eagle rays, lots of big groupers, many large snappers and sometimes you really do not know where to look. Even on quieter days, the channel is a memorable dive just for the impressive landscape of the thilas and the sand between them and there is somehow an odd feeling of accomplishment in achieving the crossing from one island to the other.

North Channel is about twenty minutes by boat and in season is one of our best spots for mantas. The channel is relatively shallow and we rarely dive deeper than 20 meters here so it is in range for competent open water divers and much of the dive is spent at between 10 and 15 meters. Nevertheless the current can run hard here so choosing the right time to visit is important. Mantas can be seen at several shallow cleaning stations in the channel or on a massive thila named Veligandu Thila which borders the Veligandu side of the channel and can offer an exciting dive by itself. If manta season has come and gone, the channel is still a great dive where divers can find a huge school of jacks, many napoleons and groupers, white tips and the occasional grey reef shark, honeycomb moray eels, stingrays, lionfish, leaf fish and an amazing variety of brightly painted reef fish.

Veligandu North is a finger-like reef protruding out of the island of Veligandu. A favourite of some of our dive guides because of the marine life that sharp-eyed divers can find and photograph there. We travel a mere 15 minutes to reach the site on our fast comfortable dhonis and we dive on the outside edge of the finger. The top of the reef lies at between 3 and 6 meters and once below the reef top, the current runs reef parallel and we enjoy an easy drift dive. The reef contains many small overhangs and it is within these overhangs that we can usually find several members of the rare ghost pipe fish family and leaf fish family. This reef is also "moray city" as it is full with many different species of moray, the most spectacular being the honeycomb or the white mouth moray. In addition, with a little luck we find feeding turtles, napoleons and a few white tip sharks as we progress along the reef. In season mantas or mobulas are also regularly sighted. The dive is suitable for all levels and the most interesting marine life is found between 8 and 18 meters though the reef descends to between 35 and 40 meters before reaching a scrubby plateau.

Caves is approximately a 20 minute boat ride from Kuramathi and is located on the western end of the atoll past the sandbank. There are many large overhangs here, but also two caves through which divers can swim. In the caves and overhangs we can often find white tips, stingrays or even nurse sharks. Only advanced divers will be able to reach both caves and most of the overhangs, but open water divers can also reach one cave and the shallower overhangs. A favourite of many repeat diving guests.

Rasdhoo is an interesting site with the wall of the island of Rasdhoo on one side and massive coral blocks (or thilas) mounted on the outside steep drop-off of the atoll. These two features create a corridor of sand between the inner reef and outer thilas, in places only 20 meters wide. The aqua dynamics of this corridor seem to attract mantas in season, and on the sandy bottom we often find resting stingrays and white tip sharks. The thilas provide encounters with hunting jacks and trevally, white-tip and grey reef sharks, eagle rays and occasionally large diamond rays. The individual thilas are inhabited by a beautiful resident blue ribbon eel, mantis shrimp and many morays and various reef fish. Napoleons are often spotted on Rasdhoo along with hawksbill turtles, plentiful sweetlips and snappers.

Fan Reef is a great dive and divers are often amazed by what they can see just two minutes boat ride from the main dive jetty. Fan reef is situated on one corner of Kuramathi island and if the current is running west we often jump in the narrow sand patch between Kuramathi house reef and the first thila of Rasdhoo Channel. This is an excellent point to start the dive as even though it is somewhat current exposed, this small area often provides an immediate sighting upon descent either of eagle rays, napoleon, barracudas, white tip and grey reef sharks, stingrays or a leopard shark and the descent with good visibility can open up a magical panorama below you. Fan reef is a wall dive and an easy drift dive and so is perfect for beginners and open water divers and most of the good stuff can be seen at shallow depths. However it is also a dive much appreciated by experienced divers and photographers. It is not a straight wall and features several large bays, a spectacular plateau and craggy coral blocks with overhangs, cracks and crevices. In the bays we often find white-tips sleeping, black tips patrolling and a leopard shark or two dozing. Eagle rays and tuna often fly by or circle in the bays and horse-eye jacks hunt fusiliers and other small fish with astonishing speed and agility. The shallow reef top at the eastern end is bedecked with huge healthy table corals and stunning reef fish. Up to a dozen semi-mature black tip reef sharks (1.2 to 1.4 meter) often circle on a highly photogenic shallow plateau and make this dive a thrilling experience, even if they are still juveniles – they are not shy! Turtles, napoleons and stingrays are often seen in the area too.

Boduga means big block (bodu-ga) in the Maldivian language of "Dhivehi" and indeed a large coral block sits just 2m under the surface at the end of the island of Kuramathi near the sandbank. This block is enveloped in reef fish. Descending from the block, one finds a sandy plateau at 25m where coral blocks litter the floor. Here we can often spot white-tips

and jacks chasing fusiliers and stingrays or a leopard shark resting on the sandy bottom. Eagle rays often pass in the blue or circle in the mildly turbulent current sometimes found here. Deeper a large overhang is found at 30m. The coral blocks mounted on the plateau are full of fishlife varying from sweetlips, to snappers to groupers and other species. Once we leave the plateau, the dive develops into a steep wall dive along which we drift with the current and keep our eyes open for sharks and rays in the blue and morays and turtles sheltering on the reef. The dive is suitable for all levels as ultimately this is a wall dive starting at 5m, but open water divers will remain shallower and not descend to the plateau.

More dive site descriptions will follow soon.....

