

the maldives adventure
developed by
surfers for surfers



“That afternoon we passed the most beautiful palm islands I have ever seen. With the sun low on our starboard side it threw a glowing sidelight onto the tiny islets, which seemed to float like flower baskets on our opposite side... Under the spell of this picture of an earthly paradise I made an entry in my notebook that the Maldives are even more beautiful than the coral atolls in Polynesia.”

Thor Heyerdahl
famed anthropologist and seafarer
1982

Story

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Pictures

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one large serving of pasta - and it still tastes great

The first thing which strikes first-time travellers to the Maldives is the stunning, picture postcard tropical atoll environment.

It looks just like the photos in the glossy brochure.

Only the real thing is even better!

After a night arrival at Malé from Australia and then a 30 minute speed boat transfer of bodies, boards and luggage north to Dhonveli Beach & Spa Resort, you wake up next morning to white sand, palm

trees and retina-searing crystal blue waters alive with an amazing variety of sea life. Daytime air temperatures are virtually fixed on 30 degrees C, balmy nights average 25 degrees C and water temperature is around 28 degrees C... and great waves seem to be everywhere.

This is pinch-myself-I-must-be-dreaming stuff!

While the number of surfers travelling to the Maldives each year during the March to October surf season on the main atolls has grown so that it is no longer the uncrowded idyll of past years, it is still one of the best value surf getaways on the planet. And certainly one of the most unforgettable.

Tony Hussein Hinde, the former Maroubra surfer who discovered the Maldives' waves and then virtually created the surf tourism

industry there, is continually asked which are the best months – and his answer is always the same: "...it depends on the year!". Every year is different. It depends on when the big southern hemisphere Autumn, Winter and Spring low pressure storm systems come sweeping east across the southern Indian Ocean, sending the swell cranking all the way up north across the Equator to the shores of the Maldives.

May-to-September are traditionally the most consistent surf months. However, the periods which are always booked out first each season by the experienced visiting surfers who go back year after year to the Maldives are mid March to mid May and mid July to early October.

However, if you push Tony he will say mid March to mid April has produced the very best waves over the years – that's if you



*Above:
In the Pasta Point camera tower,
Atoll Adventures' man on the ground,
Ahmed (Dara) Rasheed, is ever willing to share
with guests his digital images
and local knowledge.*

*Facing page:
Maldives colour - just pure magic.*



get big Autumn swells matched with light north/nor east winds usually prevailing at that time, combining to see the barrelling, bending, arcing up lefts of Honky's happening. And the locals say when it goes off, Honky's is the best spot on the Maldives... but it needs all those elements coming together to be at its very best.

The bottom line in choosing the time for your Maldives trip is to aim for late Autumn into early Winter or late Winter into early Spring. You would have to be pretty unlucky to miss out on a waves feast during these periods.

Like many other Indian Ocean locations Summer is usually a non-event in the Maldives. In December and January, in particular, the Indian Ocean produces infrequent or no swell and the summer monsoon winds reverse direction from the winter trades and blow onshore.



The daily grind of Malé - a reality check from resort life.

With its frenzied activity and densely settled population, Malé is in stark contrast to the idyllic tropic vistas of the Maldives atolls, but is well worth a half-day visit and is easily accessible from the Dhonveli Resort.

Dhonveli has changed a lot from the early 1990s when it was almost exclusively dedicated to surfers for long stretches of the year.

The standard accommodation has been modernised and new fittings installed in all rooms after the devastation of the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami. But the style remains the same for resort guests on the surfers' holiday package – the original two-storey, air conditioned bungalows with a huge double bed upstairs and downstairs a big single bed, small sitting room with mini bar fridge and TV, plus bathroom. And most of the surfers' bungalows are within a few metres of the water near the Pasta Point corner of the island.

Dhonveli, like most resorts in the Maldives, runs on unofficial daylight saving with clocks advanced an hour from Malé time to ensure guests maximise sunshine and wave time.

Atoll Adventures retains an exclusive contract with the island's owners to market and operate the surfing program. The company owns the dhonis and rental boards and employs the surf guides (who are not Dhonveli resort staff). Atoll Adventures also has the call on limiting the number of surfers on the island.

Locally-built dhonis are the water taxis of the Maldives. Atoll Adventures' three dhonis, which are dedicated to ferrying the surfers to and from the nearby breaks, are provided on an unlimited basis as part of the surf tour package (on other resorts – such as nearby Lohifushi – guests are charged US\$8 per trip, with a time limit of three hours!).

In recent years the Dhonveli Resort has undergone extensive upgrades, providing today's guest with an excellent standard of facilities for their time out of the water.

The setting surrounding the resort makes a viewing must of the light show that closes each day.





Flying overseas with a collection of boards can be a big hassle when negotiating airport check-in queues and customs... and the 'excess' baggage slug from airlines can be a pretty pricey impost on the surf holiday budget too. Hiring boards is now a viable option on Dhonveli. Atoll Adventures has a collection of quality Surftech short boards, fun boards and long boards for rent. So you can pre-book your quiver before your holiday, or take your main Mal and then supplement the water arsenal while there – it's definitely an option worth considering.

Great Guides - Great Mates

One of the best things about Dhonveli is that the surf tour packages were set up by surfers and committed from the start to catering exclusively for surfers. The Atoll Adventures team running the surf services at the resort is headed up by Tony Hussein Hinde, with Ahmed Rasheed – known to everybody as Dara – as Operations Manager. Dara has been working for Atoll Adventures for over ten years.

He runs an incredibly friendly, knowledgeable and hot surfing crew. What they don't know about the local wave conditions isn't worth knowing.

For example, tidal movements – particularly during full moon periods – mean that incredibly strong currents can run for periods of an hour or two during some days. It is impossible to paddle against these currents and stay in the line-up. If the current direction is running counter to the waves, it sends ripples up the faces making them virtually unrideable. To the untrained eye looking from the shore it is often impossible to tell when there are no-go periods blighted by the current. But Dara and his crew can set you straight on

Bob Monkman realises more Maldives dreams, all just minutes from his villa, idyllic island setting, limited numbers in the water, glass conditions and consistent lines of swell.

when you can get back in the water – you just have to ask them, they are always ready to help with all the surf conditions and forecasts info!

Dara is a pretty interesting guy. A local pool swimming champion and past-time model, he is also an accomplished surf photographer. Through his Oceanswell photography business, Dara regularly camps on Pasta Point and takes great shots which he makes available to visiting surfers.

Atoll Adventures' number two surf guide is Hussein Arif Iboo – known to visiting surfers as just Iboo – and part of the team for the past seven years. A phenomenally fluid and fearless surfer, he is a national Maldives' shortboard champion. In 2005, he won a Presidential youth award for being a great example to young people in the islands nation.

The third and newest member of the surfing crew is Ahmed Shihaz – Mike – who has been with Atoll Adventures for two years. When one of the Longbreak crew snapped a leg rope at Sultan's and his board was washed up on a rocky atoll shore which was being hit by white-water surging across the shallow inner reef, Mike paddled in, retrieved and returned the board intact.

Dara and Iboo have been to Australia twice in recent years. They travelled all around the country, staying with surfers who have made the annual winter pilgrimage to the Maldives and become their great mates.

“From the trips to Australia we hope to give our guests better services. By seeing the conditions and the crowds, we get a better understanding of why people come to the Maldives and so can work on making

*This page:
12 consecutive years of 10-day feasting at
Pasta Point and Warwick Gerrard can take
on anything this break has on offer, with
numerous helpings in one day
not uncommon.*

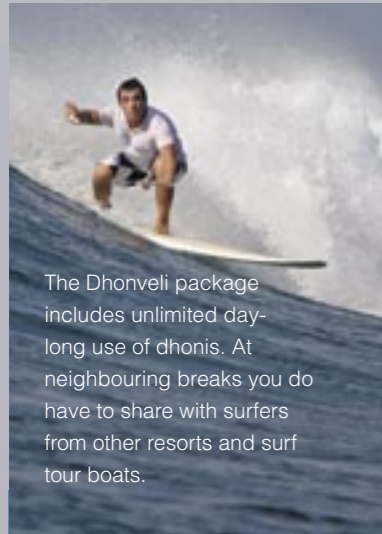


*After their 'Robinson
Crusoe' type discovery
by Tony Hussein Hide
and friend, these waves
remained a secret for
some 14 years.*

*Now they are the
exclusive playground of
the surfing guest at the
Dhonveli Resort.*

West Australian surfing great Bob Monkman returns to the lefts of Pasta Point for the first time in 17 years.

**A Smorgasbord of Spots –
Don't just dine out on Pasta**



The Dhonveli package includes unlimited day-long use of dhonis. At neighbouring breaks you do have to share with surfers from other resorts and surf tour boats.

Sultan's: Less than a kilometre and a five-to-ten minute cruise by dhoni gets you into these great right hand point waves. This is a consistent wave with a challenging outside peak take-off which turns into a thick, long, walling tube on the inside. There is also an inside take-off point favoured by longboarders to pick off unridden waves or wider sets.

Honky's: A wrapping left with 150 metre long walling waves. On the inside it hits another reef section, the waves can then jack up to almost double the height at the take-off and at the same time bend round through 90 degrees or more, adding to the speed.

Jailbreak's: A long, brilliant right with some of the fastest walling waves on the Maldives, with up to three tube sections, ending in a deep channel. Like a lot of spots in the Maldives, there are outside and inside take-off sections.

Ninja's: If you want a mellow, and generally uncrowded, perfect Mal wave then this is the spot. About 30 minutes north of Dhonveli by dhoni but you won't be disappointed by the fun factor pay off. It holds shape up to at least head-and-a-half.



it better for our guests,” Dara said. “The hospitality we received all around Australia was fantastic. It was especially great to know that what we did for people in the Maldives was really appreciated and they wanted to look after us when we visited Australia.”

There is an evolution from Tari Village then to Dhonveli now.

Tourism came relatively late to the Maldives. In 1971, an Italian tour operator visited the islands and saw the huge potential. The first resort opened in 1972 with 30 huts made

Main picture:

Like most Maldives breaks, Sultan's has deep water channels close to the take-off zones, so the refuge of the deeper water is always close.

Above and insets:

The resort's dhonis were always on hand to ferry us across the channel to sample fare other than pasta.



With action right on the doorstep, a seven to ten-day stay provides ample time for consumption of fresh pasta.

from local materials. The first visitors at that time came on a side trip from Sri Lanka. Within six years there were 17 resorts and 30,000 visitors a year.

After that first burst of development, an international consultant's ten-year tourism master plan commissioned by the Maldivian government identified scuba diving and promoting the 'Robinson Crusoe' appeal of the pristine atolls as the basis for global marketing of the islands. This was essential in order to diversify the Muslim nation's economy away from the traditional near subsistence lifestyle based on fishing and localised seaborne trade.

Tourism has just kept growing since then.

The Dhonveli resort was originally a small, exclusive tourist destination catering mainly for Italian recreational divers.

Tari Village, as it was known then, had its surf tour roots in the incredible story of Tony Hussein Hinde and a friend who were actually shipwrecked on the Maldives in the early 1970s. They came ashore on a reef nearby the island site featuring the perfect, and now world famous, waves of Pasta Point.

They kept the island's waves secret and surfed them for some 14 years. While living with the Maldivians and assimilating into the local culture during this period, Tony found, surfed and named all the main

On a longboard on the backhand, Pasta Point is not an easy wave... but goofies generally have a ball. While Pasta is still a great wave for natural-footers, they could think about shorter equipment for a few sessions.



Probably the most famous spot in the Maldives, Pasta lies at the heart of North Malé Atoll which boasts the biggest concentration of resorts and the most accessible and most reliable breaks.

Pasta Point is a long left which peels down the island's fringing coral reef. It holds shape from small to pretty big swells. The spot features an outside, deeper take-off point and a couple of inside easier take-offs, where you can pick up the shifting line-up peaks and wider breaking sets. They all feature a great drop on the take-off; quick scything bottom turn to keep up with the top-to-bottom curl; climbing and dropping to keep speed through the sections; and a down-the-line series of cutbacks and turns

The paddle out at Pasta is short. But getting in and out is through a narrow section of the reef and takes some judgement. Booties are a must. On exit if you miss the keyhole, you are then swept down the island before you can get back to shore across more difficult areas of reef which also have some sea urchins – ouch!

With a maximum of 30 surfers on the island, you will always get your fair share of great waves at Pasta during your stay at Dhonveli.



breaks in the North Male' atoll. In the late 1980s, he decided to try attracting the first surf tours to the Maldives. The resort then had just 24 rooms.

He established Atoll Adventures as the first surf tour operator in the Maldives and set up Atoll Travel in Australia to run bookings and marketing. Atoll Adventures remains the biggest operator in the surf travel field in the Maldives. As well as the set up on Dhonveli, the group now also operates a range of surf boat tours scouting waves throughout the atolls of the Maldives.

Under the terms of the lease granted by the Maldives government, only surfers staying at Tari Village had access to the waves of Pasta Point – and those exclusive water rights thankfully remain in force today on Dhonveli.

Four years ago, the resort's owners faced extra taxes and new lease terms from the Maldives government and realised they could not remain viable as a small scale resort. The decision was taken to undertake



The atmosphere at Dhonveli is of a friendly island community, unlike the exclusive air of some high end resorts.

*Facing page:
Minimalistic quality creates spacious airy interiors to the Dhonveli villas.*

*This page:
Natural wood, whitewash, swept sand walkways, and filtered light punctuated with vibrant aquatic colours help create the resort's tranquil environs.*

Tari Village re-branding brought a substantial upgrade and expansion of facilities, but there remains the protection of uncrowded waters for the surfing guest.

a major expansion program, adding more rooms and facilities. The plan also included setting up Club Blu – an Italian version of the Club Med type holiday experience, with non-stop activities and a host of new facilities to target European tourists.

The resort was re-branded from Tari Village to Dhonveli Beach & Spa Resort.

The expansion works saw the total number of rooms grow from the original 24, up to 72. Another 55 luxury water bungalows – units which sit on stilts in the water – were also completed late last year.

The new water bungalows feature a more up-market standard of accommodation and are also ideal for family groups. They come at a higher tariff than the standard surfers' package rooms and are available for all holidaymakers staying on the island, including the surfers.

With the total expansion program completed, the resort can now take up to 250 guests. But places allocated to surfers remained restricted by Atoll Adventures to a maximum of 30 board riders. And that won't change.

The expansion of the resort saw the main open-air Banana Garden restaurant more than tripled in size. Its style has not altered, continuing to provide buffet style eating – good food and lots of it, with different dishes featured each day, including lots of fresh, locally-caught seafood.

A new added element is a permanent pasta bar. All three meals each day at the Banana Garden are included in the your holiday package cost.

A word of warning – times for breakfast, lunch and dinner are strictly prescribed. So check meal session times on arrival. If you stay in the water too long it's not hard to miss out on breakfast or the lunch session.

A new up-market a la carte restaurant was also opened at the resort at the end of 2005. This is to cater for those visitors who want an additional type of holiday dining experience and are prepared to pay extra for the pleasure.

The Sunset Bar complex includes the Main Bar plus a coffee shop, disco, conference room, small gym and gift shop and Amaan Spa, which were all built during the resort expansion program. The spa offers massages which are ideal to loosen up those tight muscles after a long day in the waves.

Anybody can use these facilities but the surfing crew tend to stick to the surf-themed Co-Bar, situated overlooking the waves on Pasta Point and offering snacks, table tennis and pool tables, booming stereo and TV. Live music is sometimes featured too.



Boatmen, barmen and front of house staff provide the level of service we have come to expect.

longbreak destination details: Maldives - Dhonveli Beach & Spa Resort - Pasta Point

Other Activities

Nearly all the dozens of resorts in the Maldives cater for divers. So if you – or your travel companion – do not want to just surf, the main alternatives are daily world-class guided snorkelling and diving expeditions.

The teeming marine life is amazing. There are more species of reef fish in the Maldives than anywhere else in the world. The Maldives is also renowned for its giant (and harmless) Manta rays – awesome when viewed from below the surface by divers and awesome for surfers above the waves when these amazing creatures sometimes make spectacular leaps completely clear of the water before crashing back down with a huge splash. Giant sea turtles also abound.

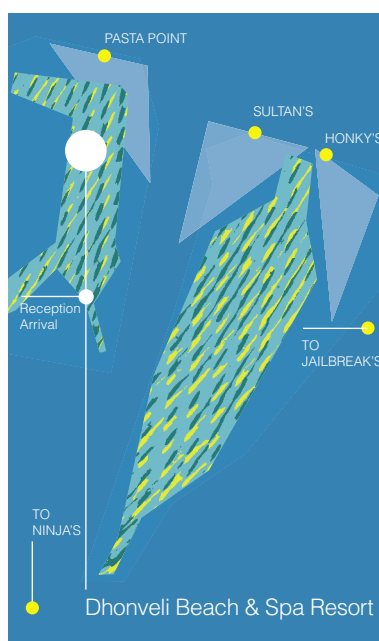
Large sharks are rarely seen, there has never been a shark attack recorded in the Maldives. Small reef sharks abound but are so well fed they are no threat whatsoever.

Another diving option is a morning trip to nearby Kuda Bandos Island, with a BBQ lunch on the beach, followed by swimming and sunbathing

The fishing on the Maldives is fantastic. Night fishing excursions at sunset which will still get you back for dinner are the go. The catch can include varieties such as grouper, snapper, squirrel fish, skipjack or barracuda.

Guided day trips to the village on the nearby island of Himmafushi; island hopping to other resorts; or a trip across to the capital of Malé are all available daily.

Snorkelling with Atoll Adventures is free but the other attractions are charged extra and have to be booked.



- MAIN SURF BREAKS**
- Pasta Point (for exclusive use of resort guests)
 - Sultan's
 - Honky's
 - Jailbreak's
 - Ninja's

How to Get There

Getting to the Maldives from Australia is best on Singapore Airlines, connecting through Singapore. Other airlines, such as Emirates and Alitalia, fly direct daily connections from Europe.

Singapore Airlines provides flights from all Australian capitals to Singapore.

The 2,111km night flight from Singapore to Malé takes between 4hrs 25mins and 4hrs 45mins, depending on weather conditions.

Return flights for Australia leave Malé late at night and arrive in Singapore early next day, with morning connections to Australia.

You can book flights direct with Singapore Airlines, through your own travel agent or do the whole package with Atoll Travel.

Destination Summary

Accommodation & Dining

Dhonveli Beach & Spa Resort

Travel Tips

All waves in the Maldives break on coral reefs, so booties are definitely advisable. Packing a medical kit for treating reef cuts is a good idea too (but, reassuringly, Dara is also set up to quickly get injured surfers to first-world-quality emergency medical facilities in Malé, should that ever be necessary).

It is advisable to pack a set of extra fins and a spare leg rope – it is not hard to knock a fin out or to cut through a leggie on the coral.

Guard against the Equatorial sun. Sunscreen and a rashie – preferably long-sleeved – are a must for UV protection. Water hats are a good idea.

More Information

Packages for Dhonveli Beach & Spa Resort can only be booked through

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