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The Maldives' 7 best new hotels

The Maldives is home to some of the world's most beautiful resorts, a number of which have just recently opened their doors for business. These newcomers may not have a long history, but they're our pick of the freshly minted bunch.

It really is the stuff of holiday dreams: 1,190 exquisite low-lying, white-sand, palmtree- peppered islands, surrounded by pristine coral reefs and iridescent lagoons awash with extraordinary marine life. With an astonishing 20 to 25 new resorts – many of them five-star – opening each year, the allure of the Maldives knows no bounds. "For many people, this is a trip-of-a-lifetime destination – be it a honeymoon, a couple's getaway or a relaxed family holiday – so it's imperative to choose the right resort," says Di Lechner, co-founder of Maldives specialty agency **Addicted to Maldives**. "It's a lot of money to invest in a holiday, potentially with seaplanes, private boats and other luxuries, so you really do need to get it right." This is her pick of the best new, re-opening or soon-to-open resorts in this must-visit part of the world.

Vakkaru Maldives

Rustic charm meets modern luxury at **Vakkaru**, a blissful drop of land in the UNESCO-listed Baa Atoll. It's a 25-minute seaplane ride here from Malé, the Maldivian capital; when you arrive, you're met with sparkling views and white-sand beaches, the 125 villas tucked between palms or on stilts over the water.

Design is eco-chic: thatched roofs, earthy colours and four-poster beds draped in floaty material. The four-bedroom overwater residence takes things up a notch, adding living and dining rooms plus a terrace where spa treatments can be enjoyed. Back on land there's another spa, five restaurants and bars, and a watersports centre where you can sign up to snorkel or organise sunset cruises.

Four-bedroom villa at Vakkaru Maldives

InterContinental Maldives Maamunagau Resort

If your bucket list includes snorkelling with whale sharks and swimming with manta rays in an immense natural lagoon, this could be the place to do it. Located on the southernmost tip of Raa Atoll, close to the UNESCO biosphere reserve of Baa Atoll, the new **InterContinental Maldives** offers 81 beach, lagoon and overwater villas and residences, six restaurants and bars, the signature AVI Spa, and an adults-only enclave with a bar and infinity pool at the water's edge. It's also the first property to offer all guests access to the amenities of Club InterContinental throughout the island.

© InterContinental Maldives Maamunagau Resort

The Nautilus Maldives

This intimate retreat is like being on your own private island. It has a contemporary bohemian ambience and embraces the concept of absolute guest freedom; there's no dress code, no set dining hours and no fixed menu choices.

What the **Nautilus** does have is a bevy of bespoke services and activity options that follow the natural rhythm of the Baa Atoll. The 26 beach and ocean houses are managed by 'house masters' who seem to be able to preempt guests' every whim. Swimming with manta rays, visiting deserted islands and cruising on a custom-built yacht can all be on the cards.

The Nautilus Maldives

Gili Lankanfushi Maldives

Beloved **Gili Lankanfushi** in North Malé Atoll will look better than ever when it reopens on 1 December after a major fire in January. The forced closure has resulted in the refurbishment of all seven luxury villa categories, and the opportunity to add new villa suites, residences and two-bedroom family villas – all with pools – to the accommodation portfolio.

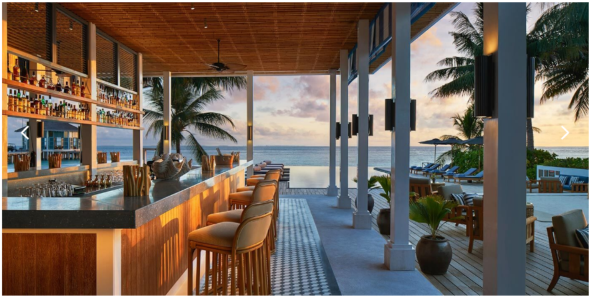
An enhanced dining experience at Kashiveli restaurant completes the picture, joining a stable of three other venues to wine and dine. From the spa (sign up for multi-day wellness journeys) to the resort's signature butler service, Gili's barefoot luxury ethos remains fully intact.

Gili Lankanfushi Maldives

Raffles Maldives Meradhoo Resort

You'll have many jaw-on-the-floor moments at **this freshly minted Raffles**, a 55-minute flight from Malé in the Gaafu Alifu Atoll. Like when you soak in your private pool and watch the sun set over the Indian Ocean; when you savour grilled fish cooked on the sand at The Firepit, one of five restaurants and bars; when you bliss out gazing at fish in the overwater spa; or when you swim with resident turtles, 'Marine Butler' in tow.

If you book one of the 16 overwater bungalows (there are 21 more on the island), you'll have the added extravagance of pulling up to your sumptuous accommodation in a *dhoni* (traditional boat).



© Raffles Maldives Meradhoo

Heritance Aarah

As well suited for couples as it is for families, the beautiful new **Heritance Aarah** is an action-packed new resort in Raa Atoll, a 40-minute seaplane flight from Malé. Featuring 150 beach and ocean villas, suites and residences, six world-class dining options, a fitness centre, kids' club, overwater spa treatments, a dive centre and an array of water sports, Heritance Aarah guests can be as active or relaxed as they like. All rates include a premium all-inclusive meal plan, there are cooking classes for adults and children, and you can participate in a host of entertainment and social activities.

Heritance Aarah

Kudadoo Maldives Private Island

A smaller and even more beautiful sibling to the iconic Hurawalhi Maldives, **Kudadoo** is the only truly all-inclusive private island in the Maldives. With 15 exclusive residences, this bewitching eco-hideaway is built with sustainable materials, is 100 per cent solar-powered, and offers an array of environmentally friendly activities and amenities.

But star billing goes to its 'AAA' concept – anything, anytime, anywhere – which allows you to embark on adventures whenever you wish, as many times as they wish. Think unlimited spa treatments, private dining, beach picnics, Champagne…

Kudadoo Maldives Private Island

Others to consider

SAii Lagoon Maldives

A 15-minute speedboat ride from Malé, this is a fun stopover island if your flight arrives late into Malé International Airport.

Waldorf Astoria Maldives Ithaafushi

A stunning resort offering 122 beach, reef and overwater villas, all with pools, plus 11 dining venues and a soon-toopen ultra-luxe private island.

LUX* North Male Atoll

Miami meets Maldives at this contemporary retreat featuring oversized villas with rooftop terraces, live music, DJs and a super-cool vibe.

Baglioni Resort Maldives

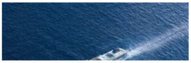
Italy's renowned Baglioni Hotels & Resorts brings a stylish new wave of la dolce vita to the Maldives, complete with sunset aperitivi.

Emerald Maldives Resort & Spa

A new deluxe and all-inclusive hideaway in Raa Atoll with 120 beach and lagoon villas, private pools and outdoor showers.

*This article originally appeared in Signature Luxury Travel & Style magazine. To subscribe to the latest issue, **click here**.*

Main image © Gili Lankanfushi Maldives



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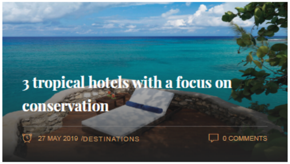

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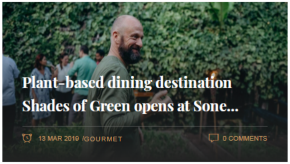

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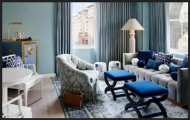

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