



CLIMB ABOARD A SEMI-SUBMARINE

The resorts of the Maldives are on an endless mission to create new activities for the amusement of their guests and the 52-villa Outrigger Konotta Maldives Resort is no exception. It offers trips on what it describes as a “semi-submarine”, which is, as the name suggests, a novel 14-seat boat that features a special fibreglass hull with large windows that afford spectacular views of the ecosystem around the island. During the 30-minute day and 40-minute night tours with a knowledgeable guide you’re able to clearly view reef fish as well as, on occasions, turtles and sharks. At night, a special “fluro-light” is used to observe the usually not visible fluorescent colourings of certain marine-life.



VISIT AN AUTHENTIC ISLAND VILLAGE

It’s not easy for western visitors to make a connection with ordinary Maldivians, what with the distance between resorts and the conservative nature of the Muslim society which doesn’t exactly encourage fraternisation with foreigners outside resorts. But many resorts, such as the Outrigger Konotta located in South Huvadhoon in the country’s south, do offer excursions to villages on nearby islands. Such a tour can offer an invaluable insight into the simple daily lives of Maldivians, far removed from the glamour and, to an extent, artificiality of five-star resorts in the country’s south.



SWIM WITH TURTLES

Five of the world’s seven species of turtles occur in the Maldives so it’s not surprising that one of the signature Maldivian experiences is to snorkel with these so-called ancient mariners of the sea. The two most common types of turtles in the Maldives are the hawksbill and green turtle. Snorkelling excursions with experienced guides can usually be booked through resorts (don a lifejacket if you’re not a confident swimmer). Even if you don’t spot too many turtles there’s usually a wealth of other marine life to be enjoyed below the surface, although you may these days encounter stark evidence of coral-bleaching (Outrigger Konotta runs a coral-planting program overseen by an in-house marine biologist).

Six of the Best

MALDIVIAN EXPERIENCES AND EXCURSIONS

By **Anthony Dennis**

Anthony Dennis visited as a guest of Outrigger Konotta Maldives Resort. All of the featured experiences and activities are available to guests at the resort. See outrigger.com; visitmaldives.com



Photo: Getty Images

TAKE A DOLPHIN-SPOTTING CRUISE

Although turtles remain the number one marine life attraction, the seas around the Maldives are teeming with dolphins, with many resorts offering private and group-based morning and afternoon spotting excursions. Almost two dozen species of dolphins call the Maldives home, including bottlenoses and spinners, with Maldivian guides and skippers boasting intimate knowledge of the waters in which they can be found. Of course there’s no guarantee you’ll sight dolphins on a spotting excursion but, if you do, you’re likely to be rewarded with an amazing spectacle as the massed playful creatures swarm around your boat and perform aerobic feats around you.



ORDER A PRIVATE SUNSET DINNER

If there’s something that the five-star resorts of the Maldives do better than anywhere else in the world it’s a romantic, barefoot, private multi-course dinner on a sandy beach location at sunset. Outrigger Konotta is blessed with some large expanses of sandy beaches so tables are able to be set well away from other guests, ensuring a generally intimate experience. If you prefer a mainly daytime interlude then perhaps book a tour to a local deserted sandbank where food and drinks are served on the sand with your boat whisking you back to the resort after sunset.



SAIL ABOARD A TRADITIONAL DHONI

One of the most distinctive and exotic sights of any visit to the Maldives is that of a dhoni, the traditional Maldivian boat, passing across its Indian Ocean waters or simply anchored offshore. Reminiscent of an Arabian dhow, the dhoni is primarily used for fishing but the vessels are also employed for ferrying villagers between islands and, of course, for purposes of tourism, the Maldives’ primary foreign exchange earner. Once powered by sails, built with coconut tree timber and without plans, nowadays many dhoni are fashioned from fibreglass, and with boat-building skills on the wane, made overseas and fitted with modern engines.