

THE MALDIVES

Paradise Island even for the children

If anyone ever asked me what my lifelong wish was; I would definitely declare that it was to 'travel the entire world'. So you can imagine the excitement I felt when my husband informed that would be making a short trip to paradise island – the Maldives!

I would also like to mention that I love traveling with my family, which includes Dayyan, our son — a seven year old bundle of mischief!

Our planning began a little early, exploring and scrutinising the Internet for the best island catering to the gratification of little ones.

And yes, my son was not the only one below 4 feet in height on board. Few other friends also joined us on the same trip along with their little ones.

While surfing the net we were introduced to innumerable islands at the Maldives; pristine beaches, turquoise blue water, open showers and infinity pools; but most of the islands hosted resorts were not children friendly, primarily catering to the need of honeymooners and people seeking escape from tiny tots.

After some rummaging around we got what we were looking for, the secluded island of Furanafushi that housed a gorgeous resort by the name of Sheraton Full Moon. This particular resort had many options including Water Bungalows, Beach Villas, Pool Villas, and Garden Villas to cater to differing needs of the guests.

Our son particularly loves plunging in white sand trying to assemble something that looks like a castle. To me his extraordinary attempts always look like lopsided lumps of sand but what do I know of art? However, his particular affinity towards sandy beaches helped us decide on our place of stay – the Beach Villas.

Personally we would have preferred to stay in the Water Bungalows overlooking the mighty Indian Ocean but they are off limits for children, lest they somehow topple and fall off the deck. However, when we reached the paradise beach island, I realised the water bungalows were not for the shallow hearted at all and it was a good decision to have selected the beach villa that overlooked the same ocean, but with a significant distance in-between. But that's a

story would like to come back to later.

After all the bookings were made online and payments prepaid, it was time to board the plane for our destination island.

The process was not that simple really. We had to first go to Sri Lanka and catch a connecting flight for the Maldives. From there it was either a sea plane cruise or a speed boat trip to our final destination. Considering the travel distance, which was

Even though the duration of travel may sound quite comfortable for frequent travellers, parents of little ones know how squeamish it can be when accompanied by children.

One suggestion to bag packers is to never rely on a taxi service while on the main island of the Maldives as there aren't any! If someone is staying one night at Hulhumale Island, they must inform the

ever made during the trip; otherwise there would be hungry and cranky children crying and complaining at every gush of wind, splash of water, or waves hurling at the boat.

The next day we took a scenic trip to our fantasy island and boy was it amazing! The clearest blue water stunned us all. The children were consistently looking out for sharks in a super safe, stylish catamaran boat that could have easily taken many more onboard.

Once we reached the island, we were greeted with coconut water, ice cool drinks and dune buggies to take us to the villas. Yes! I said it right — dune buggies were common on the island, especially to the delight of lazy travellers like 'moi'.

The resort had chaperoned adventure clubs to keep the kids busy, away from the deluding digital world. Most important of all it gifted you with free time to take that hot oil massage and foot spa at the dreamy Spa Island while sipping on mocktails or mojitos.

How could life be more beautiful you ask? Let me explain.

Imagine waking up to a beautiful sunny day, overlooking the blue ocean, sitting cross-legged on lounge chairs, reading a novel, while your hubby swims in the crystal-clear water just in front of you with your little one.

Could life be any better? To me – impossible! However, for those more adventurous, this might sound a bit too slow and boring for their desired dose of adrenaline. Well, despair not! The Maldives offers much more than just relaxation you can opt for any type of water sports you like over here – even swimming with the sharks mid sea, if you please!

For the time being I was just happy staring at nothingness for a while, imagining the magnanimity of world, the unseen beauty and of course sipping that heavenly mocktail in hand with soft jazz music playing in the background while my son created art on the safe crystal white, natural beach with his friends and enjoying a delightful time, far away from the toxic digital world.

By Mehrin Mubdi Chowdhury
Photo: Collected



TRAVEL TIPS

US dollar is the most convenient form of currency, for any sort of exchange on and off the resort islands. There is no need to change the currency to Maldivian Rufiyaa.

Every villa, water bungalow is supplied with life vests for any unwarranted circumstance, please check that you have one for each of you; children sized vests are available for the little one.

around 15 minutes, we opted for a speed boat instead of a sea plane. The latter is usually preferred for islands that take more than 30 minutes of travel time.

So, our journey began towards Colombo. After a comfortable three-hour flight we reached Bandaranaike International Airport. After a tolerable transit of three hours, we hopped aboard a smaller plane for another hour of air travel to Velana International Airport.

On any sort of boat trip, please make sure that your child along with you wears the vests, all along.

Open showers, jacuzzis are man-made exclusive gifts for the travellers. Please make best use of these.

SPA visit is a must on any sort of Resort Island; if that means cutting out on few water sports or that really expensive dining experience. Be it!

For foodies, live seafood dining is a must.

hotel to provide transport. The interesting bit is that the particular international airport is also a jetty and once you land you are expected to take a sea plane or a speed boat for transfer.

Since it was already nightfall by the time we reached the destination, we opted for a one day stay at the island of Hulhumale and then cruise to our own paradise island, the very next day. The decision was the best we