



Welcome to the Maldives

A Handbook for US Fulbright Scholars



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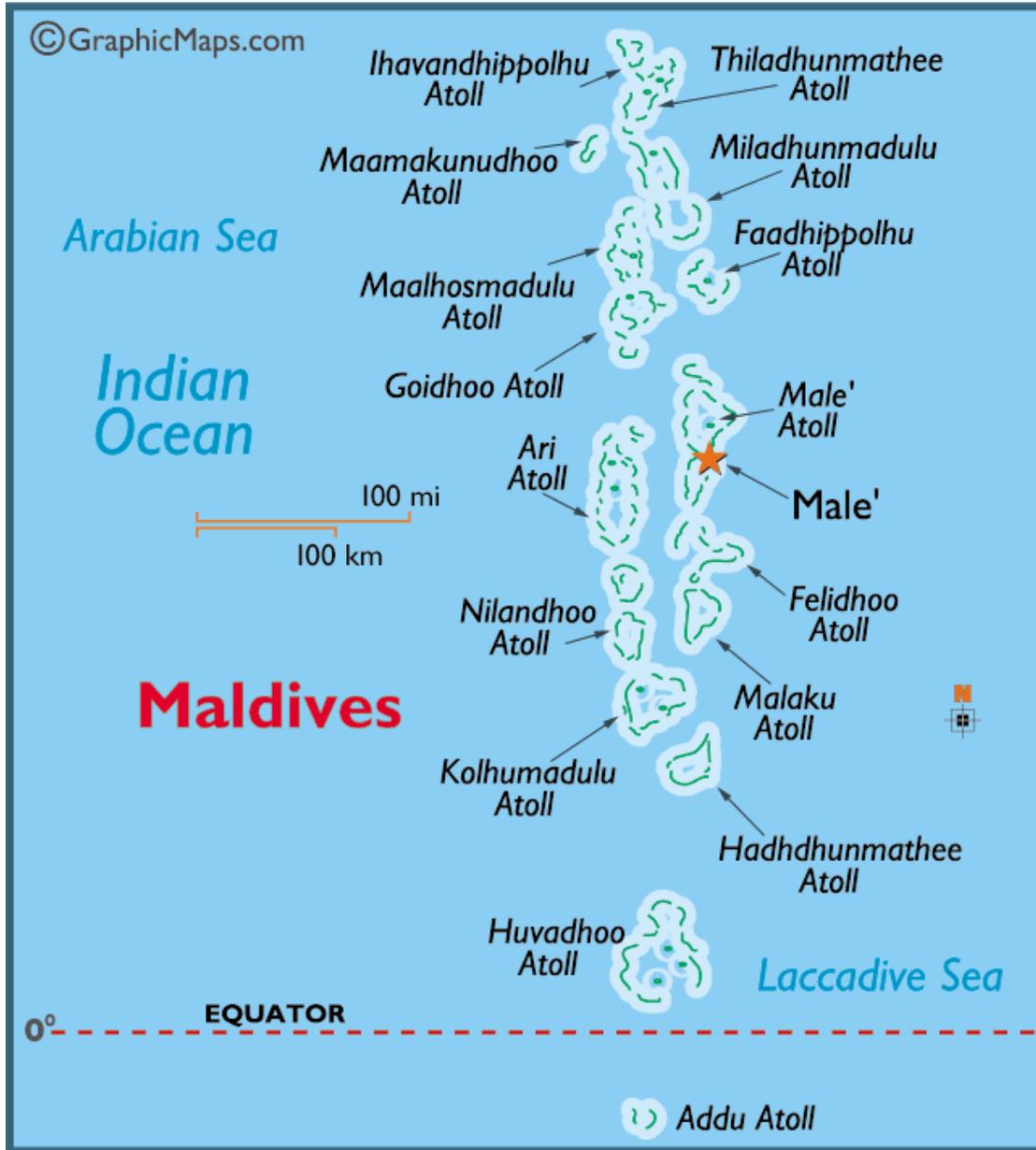
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The Maldives



General Information

Facts about the Maldives

Population:	395,650 (July 2010 est.), plus over 600,000 tourists annually
Capital:	Malé
Population distribution:	Varies significantly from less than 150 on remote islands to 83,000 in Male' which is just 2 sq km.
Language:	Maldivian Dhivehi (dialect of Sinhala, script derived from Arabic), English is spoken by most government officials
Adult literacy:	96.3%
Religion:	Sunni Muslim (100%)
Currency:	Rufiyaa
Life expectancy:	men - 72 yrs; women - 76.54 yrs
Unemployment	14.4%
Gross Domestic product	-4 % real growth (2009 est.); 5.8% (2008 est.)
Average per capita income	US\$ 4,200 per annum (purchasing power parity)
Land area:	298 sq. Km spread over roughly 90,000 sq km
Length:	820 km
Width:	80-120 km
Coastline:	644 km
Climate:	Tropical. The monsoons are mild and the temperature varies very little.
Monsoon rain seasons:	Dry, northeast monsoon (November to March) and rainy, southwest monsoon (June to August)
Terrain:	Flat, with white sandy beaches
Highest point:	Unnamed location on Wilingili island in the Addu Atoll - 2.4 m
Average temperature	Between 25 and 30 degrees Celsius.
Average rainfall	The average rainfall is below 2m per annum.
Time zone:	GMT +5 hours

Description: 1,190 coral islands grouped into 26 atolls (200 inhabited islands, plus 80 islands for tourist resorts). Composed of live [coral reefs](#) and [sand bars](#), the atolls are situated atop a submarine ridge 960 kilometers long that rises abruptly from the depths of the [Indian Ocean](#) and runs from north to south.

The Maldives: An Overview¹

Geography

Area: 298 sq. km. (115 sq. mi.), over 1,100 islands; twice the size of Washington, DC.

Cities: *Capital*--Male (pop. 100,000).

Terrain: Flat atoll islands.

Climate: Hot and humid.

People

Nationality: *Noun and adjective*--Maldivian(s).

Population (2009 est.): 314,000 (plus 80,000 expatriate workers who are not counted in the census).

Population growth rate: 1.66%. Population growth rate has dropped dramatically in recent years.

Ethnic groups: Maldivians.

Religion: Sunni Islam.

Languages: Dhivehi (official); many government officials speak English.

Education: *Years compulsory*--7. *Enrollment*--primary (grades 1-7) 100%; secondary (grades 8-10) 70%. *Literacy*--97%. (Sources: Maldives Department of National Planning and World Bank)

Health: *Infant mortality rate*--24/1,000 (Source: World Bank). *Life expectancy*--72 years.

Resident work force: *Community, social and personal services*--21%; *manufacturing*--13%; *fishing*--11%; *tourism*--11%; *transport, storage, and communication*--9%; *other*--35%.

Government

Type: Republic.

Independence: July 26, 1965 (formerly a British protectorate).

Constitution: August 7, 2008.

Branches: *Executive*--president, cabinet. *Legislative*--unicameral Majlis (parliament).

Judicial--Supreme Court, High Court, Civil Court, Criminal Court, Family and Juvenile Court, and 204 general courts.

Administrative subdivisions: 19 atolls and capital city.

Political parties: Adhaalath Party (AP), Dhivehi Raiyyethunge Party (DRP)--Maldivian

People's Party (MDP) Progressive Party of Maldives (PPM), Islamic Democratic Party (IDP),

Social Liberal Party (SLP), Dhivevi Quamee Party (DQP), People's Alliance (PA), Republican

Party (Jumhooree), others.

Suffrage: Universal at age 21.

Economy

GDP (2010): \$1.48 billion.

GDP growth rate (2010): 4.8%.

Per capita GDP (2010 est.): \$4,770.

Inflation, year over year (2010 est.): 4.7%.

Debt, external (2009 est.): \$933 million.

Exchange rate (official peg): 12.8 rufiyaa (MVR) = U.S. \$1.

Unemployment rate (2006 est.): 14.4%.

Current account balance (2010 est.): -\$460 million.

Percentages of GDP (2010 est.): *Tourism*--29%; *transport and communications*--20%;

¹ Excerpts from *CIA: World Fact Book*, www.destmaldives.com.

government--18%; manufacturing--7%; fishing--3%; construction--6%; agriculture--2%; other--10%.

Trade (2010 est.): *Exports--\$180 million: fish products. Major markets--Thailand, Sri Lanka, U.K., France. Imports--\$980 million: foodstuffs, petroleum products, transport equipment, construction equipment. Major suppliers--Singapore, U.A.E., India, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Thailand.*

PEOPLE, HISTORY, AND CULTURE

Maldives comprises 1,191 islands in the Indian Ocean. The earliest settlers were probably from southern India. Indo-European speakers followed them from Sri Lanka in the fourth and fifth centuries BC. In the 12th century AD, sailors from East Africa and Arab countries came to the islands. Today, the Maldivian ethnic identity is a blend of these cultures, reinforced by religion and language.

Originally Buddhists, Maldivians were converted to Sunni Islam in the mid-12th century. Islam is the official religion of the entire population. Close community relationships and a strict adherence to Islamic precepts have historically helped keep crime low and under control. However, a growing heroin addiction problem and the emergence of youth gangs, especially in Male, have increased the crime rate and the incidence of street violence.

The official and common language is Dhivehi, which is related to Sinhala, a language of Sri Lanka. The writing system is from right to left. English is used widely in commerce and increasingly as the medium of instruction in government schools.

Some social stratification exists on the islands. It is not rigid, since rank is based on varied factors, including occupation, wealth, perceived Islamic virtue, and family ties. Members of the social elite are concentrated in Male.

The early history of the Maldives is obscure. According to Maldivian legend, a Sinhalese prince named KoiMale was stranded with his bride--daughter of the king of Sri Lanka--in a Maldivian lagoon and stayed on to rule as the first sultan.

Over the centuries, the islands have been visited and their development influenced by sailors from countries on the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean littorals. Mopla pirates from the Malabar Coast--present-day Kerala state in India--harassed the islands. In the 16th century, the Portuguese subjugated and ruled the islands for 15 years (1558-73) before being driven away by the warrior-patriot Muhammad Thakurufar Al-Azam.

Although governed as an independent Islamic sultanate for most of its history from 1153 to 1968, the Maldives was a British protectorate from 1887 until July 26, 1965, which is now annually marked as Independence Day. In 1953, there was a brief, abortive attempt at a republican form of government, after which the sultanate was re-imposed. Following independence from Britain in 1965, the sultanate continued to operate for another 3 years. On November 11, 1968, it was abolished and replaced by a republic, and the country assumed its present name.

Environmental Concerns

There is growing concern about coral reef and marine life damage because of coral mining (used for building and jewelry making), sand dredging, solid waste pollution, and climate change. Mining of sand and coral have removed the natural coral reef that protected several important islands, making them highly susceptible to the erosive effects of the sea. The practices have been banned in recent years. In April 1987, high tides swept over the

Maldives, inundating much of Male and nearby islands. The December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami inundated a number of islands, contaminating freshwater sources and damaging houses, soil, and groundwater. These events prompted high-level Maldivian interest in global climatic changes, as the country's highest point is about 8 feet (about 2.4 meters) above sea level.

Investment in Education

The government expenditure for education was 8% of GDP in 2006. Literacy in Maldives is high at 97%. Maldives has made great strides over the years in primary and lower secondary education, with 100% enrollment in the primary level (grade 1 to 7) since 2002. Secondary school enrollment has also improved significantly, with about 70% progressing to secondary level. Lower secondary schools (grades 8 through 10) are located on 138 islands. As of 2008, the government aimed to make 10 years of education available to all before 2010. Only a small proportion of children leave school with a qualification, and "Ordinary level" pass rates (at the completion of grade 10) are low for those who opt to take the examination. As of mid-2007, access to higher secondary schools (grades 11 and 12) was limited as schools were located on just 14 islands. Access to tertiary education is more limited. Although there is no gender bias for primary and lower secondary schools, there is a bias in favor of boys for upper secondary and tertiary education.

GOVERNMENT

A 1968 referendum approved the constitution, making Maldives a republic with executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government. The constitution was amended in 1970, 1972, 1975, and again in 2008.

Ibrahim Nasir, Prime Minister under the pre-1968 sultanate, became President and held office from 1968 to 1978. He was succeeded by Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, who was elected President in 1978 and reelected in 1983, 1988, 1993, 1998, and again in October 2003. After 30 years of rule, in October 2008 Gayoom was defeated by Maldivian Democratic Party candidate Mohamed Nasheed in the first multiparty presidential elections held in 30 years. Nasheed was inaugurated on November 11, 2008 as head of the executive branch. Nasheed reduced the number of government ministries from 21 to 14, appointed a 14-member cabinet, and replaced the eight Majlis members appointed by his predecessor. On February 7, 2012 Nasheed resigned after several weeks of protest and Vice President Waheed took over as President. Elections are next scheduled for 2013 but may occur earlier.

The current unicameral Majlis, elected in May 2009, is composed of 77 members serving 5-year terms. In February 2009, the Majlis passed legislation that increased the number of seats to 77 from 50. Election results were: DRP 36.8%, MDP 32.9 %, PA 9.2%, DQP 2.6% Republican Party 1.3%, independents 17.1%; seats by party--DRP 28, MDP 26, PA 7, DQP 2, Republican Party 1, independents 13. The next Majlis elections will be held in 2014.

The Maldivian legal system--a mixture of traditional Islamic and common-law principles--is administered by an attorney general, prosecutor general, secular officials, a chief justice, and lesser judges on each of the 19 atolls, who are appointed by the president. A new Supreme Court appointed by the previous President, Gayoom, took office in September 2008. Under the laws of the 2008 constitution, however, the judiciary has been subject to review by the Judicial Services Commission, and permanent Supreme Court justices were sworn in on August 10, 2010. High Court judges were appointed on March 27, 2011. Every inhabited island has a magistrate court.

Principal Government Officials

President – Dr. Mohamed Waheed
Vice President - Mr. Mohamed Waheed Deen
Minister of Home Affairs - Dr Mohamed Jameel Ahmed
Minister of Defence and National Security - Mr Mohamed Nazim
Minister of Education - Dr Asim Ahmed
Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture - Ahmed Adheeb Abdul Ghafoor
Minister of Economic Development – Mr. Ahemed Mohamed

ECONOMY

The Maldivian economy is based on tourism and fishing. Economic growth has been powered mainly by tourism, the backbone of the economy, and its spinoffs in the transportation, communication, and construction sector. More than 700,000 tourists visit annually. Fishing remains an important part of the economy as well. The Indian Ocean tsunami in December 2004 devastated many islands. The Maldivian economy made a remarkable recovery, with a rebound in tourism and post-tsunami reconstruction.

Of the Maldives' 1,191 islands, only 200 are inhabited. The population is scattered throughout the country, with the greatest concentration on the capital island, Male. Limitations on potable water and arable land constrain expansion. While income disparity remains high, particularly between the capital and distant islands, the Maldives' growth has yielded considerable social progress. The net enrollment in primary education is close to 100%. Literacy rates are about 97%. Infant and maternal mortality are declining rapidly.

GDP in 2010 totaled \$1.48 billion, or about \$4,770 per capita. From 2000-2010, real GDP growth averaged around 6% per year except for 2005, when GDP declined following the Indian Ocean tsunami, and 2009 when GDP shrank by 2% as tourist arrivals declined and capital flows plunged in the wake of the global financial crisis. The Maldives Monetary Authority (Central Bank) expects GDP growth around 4% in 2011. Inflation was at 4.7% in 2010.

The Maldives had a merchandise trade deficit of under \$300 million until 2003. Since then the trade deficit has reached an unprecedented \$780 million. In 2010, Maldives' economy was helped by a significant upturn in tourist arrivals. Consequently, the current account deficit was contained at around \$460 million in 2010. The balance of payments recorded a surplus of about \$50 million. Tourism is expected to continue to grow in 2011.

Fiscal control has deteriorated recently due to increased government spending, including large wage increases as well as falling revenues. The budget deficit was about 16% of GDP in 2010. Government expenditure was 51% of GDP and revenue was about 34% of GDP. According to government estimates, the deficit was forecast at 15% of GDP in 2010. Recent large budget deficits have led to a sharp buildup of public debt, prompting the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to classify Maldives as being at moderate risk of debt distress.

In December 2009, the IMF approved a \$93 million loan for the country. After the first two disbursements, the IMF withheld subsequent disbursements due to concerns that the budget deficit must be further reduced. Maldives is facing a foreign exchange shortage. The current official exchange rate against the U.S. dollar is rufiyaa 12.8.

Under the IMF program, the government agreed to cut expenditure, substantially downsize

the government workforce, reduce subsidies, change the tax system to direct taxes, and privatize many industries. The government also aims to move from being a service provider to a regulator, and to enhance the role of private sector. These programs require major reform in the legal and regulatory framework of the various sectors. However, most of these plans have not progressed smoothly. For instance, the government reduced civil servant salaries by an average of 14% in October 2009, but the Maldives Civil Service Commission (CSC) has filed a lawsuit to restore these salaries. Moreover, plans to retrench civil service staff have been put on hold for lack of funds. The government's privatization plans are also jeopardized by a recent law passed by the parliament which requires parliamentary approval to privatize state institutions. The government did privatize the international airport, and it sold government-held shares in a telecommunications company prior the passage of law. The government also signed a management contract with an Indian healthcare provider to manage a state-owned hospital with the aim of improving its management and services.

International shipping to and from the Maldives is mainly operated by the private sector with only a small fraction of the tonnage carried on vessels operated by the national carrier, Maldives Shipping Management Ltd.

Over the years, the Maldives has received economic assistance from multilateral development organizations, including the UN Development Program (UNDP), Asian Development Bank, and the World Bank. Individual donors--including Japan, India, Australia, and European and Arab countries (including Islamic Development Bank and the Kuwaiti Fund)--also have contributed. In a bid to promote exports, the U.S. Government restored the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) trade program to the Maldives in December 2009. The United States is seeking to provide various other assistance efforts to defend against climate change, prevent drug use, and enhance U.S. investment. The Maldives became a member of the International Labor Organization in 2009.

Diversifying beyond tourism and fishing, reforming public finance, and increasing employment are the major challenges facing the government. Over the longer term Maldivian authorities worry about the impact of erosion and possible global warming on their low-lying country; 80% of the area is 1 meter (about 3.3 feet) or less above sea level.

Economic Sectors:

Tourism. In recent years, Maldives has successfully marketed its natural assets for tourism--beautiful, unpolluted beaches on small coral islands, diving in blue waters abundant with tropical fish, and glorious sunsets. Tourism now brings in about \$600 million a year. Tourism and related services contributed 29% of GDP in 2010. But its indirect contribution is much higher. As a result, tourism is the catalyst for growth. Since the first resort was established in 1972, more than 95 islands have been developed, with a total capacity of some 23,600 beds. Maldives has embarked on an ambitious tourism expansion plan; several resorts are under construction. However, resort expansion has not been planned very well. There is a glut of hotel rooms and several half-built resorts. Over 790,000 tourists (mainly from Europe) visited Maldives in 2010. The average occupancy rate is about 70%. Maldives had experienced capacity utilization rates of over 80%--reaching over 95% in the peak winter tourist season--prior to the new resort drive that began in 2008. Average tourist stay is 8 days.

Fishing. This sector employs about 11% of the labor force. The fisheries industry, including fish processing, traditionally contributes about 7% of GDP. Due to a drastic drop in the fish catch, the industry's contribution to GDP was only about 4% in 2008 and 3% in 2009. Fish export earnings were estimated at \$80 million in 2009. The use of nets is illegal; all fishing

is done by line. Production was about 100,000 metric tons in 2009, most of which was skipjack tuna. More than 40% is exported, largely to Sri Lanka, Japan, Hong Kong, Thailand, and the European Union. Fresh, chilled, frozen, dried, salted, and canned tuna exports account for about 90% of all marine product exports.

Agriculture. Poor soil and scarce arable land have historically limited agriculture to a few subsistence crops, such as coconut, banana, breadfruit, papayas, mangoes, taro, betel, chilies, sweet potatoes, and onions. Almost all food, including staples, has to be imported. The December 2004 tsunami inundated several agricultural islands with salt water, contaminating the groundwater. Some of these islands still do not have clean groundwater. Agriculture provides about 2.0% of GDP.

Manufacturing. The manufacturing sector provides less than 7% of GDP. Traditional industry consists of boat building and handicrafts, while modern industry is limited to a few tuna canneries, a bottling plant, and a few enterprises in the capital producing PVC pipe, soap, furniture, and food products. Five garment factories that had exported principally to the United States closed in 2005, following the expiration of the Multi-Fiber Arrangement (MFA) that had set quotas on developing country garment exports to developed countries. The loss of these factories has not proven an insurmountable hurdle, however, as most of the profits were repatriated and most of the labor was expatriate.

Other. The construction sector contributes approximately 6% of GDP.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Maldives follows a nonaligned policy and is committed to maintaining friendly relations with all countries. According to the Foreign Ministry, the country has a UN Mission in New York, embassies in the United States (the Ambassador to Washington is resident in New York), Sri Lanka, China, the United Kingdom, Bangladesh, India, Japan, Singapore, and Malaysia, as well as diplomatic missions in Geneva and Brussels. India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka maintain resident embassies in Male. Denmark, Norway, the U.K., Germany, Turkey, and Sweden have consular agencies in Male under the supervision of their embassies in Sri Lanka and India. The UNDP has a representative resident in Male, as do the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO). Like the United States, many countries have nonresident ambassadors accredited to the Maldives, most of them based in Sri Lanka or India. The Maldives is a member of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). In 2010, Maldives was elected to a seat on the United Nations Human Rights Council, and in 2011 it will host the 17th annual South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) summit. President Nasheed's skilled rhetoric and his consensus-building among smaller island nations brought global attention to Maldives at the December 2009 United Nations climate change conference. In March 2010, Maldives hosted a donor forum that yielded \$313 million in pledges to the country from multilateral development banks, the European Union, and many nations including the United States.

U.S. MALDIVIAN RELATIONS

The United States has friendly relations with the Republic of Maldives. The U.S. Ambassador and some Embassy staff in Sri Lanka are accredited to the Maldives and make regular visits. The United States has sought to support the Maldives' democratic transition and economic development agenda. U.S. Naval vessels have regularly called at Male in recent years.

U.S. contributions to economic development in the Maldives have been made principally

through international organization programs. Following the December 2004 tsunami, the U.S. and Maldives signed a bilateral assistance agreement for \$8.6 million in reconstruction assistance. This assistance will help in the rebuilding of harbors, sewerage systems, and electrical generation facilities and in the development of aid absorption capacity in the Ministry of Finance. The United States has directly funded training in airport management and narcotics interdiction and provided desktop computers for Maldivian customs, immigration, and drug-control efforts in recent years. At the March 2010 Maldives donor forum, the United States (largely through the U.S. Agency for International Development--USAID) pledged \$4.6 million for climate change adaptation, bond market reform, maritime security, border security, and International Military Education and Training (IMET). The United States also trains a small number of Maldivian military personnel annually. About 10 U.S. citizens are resident in the Maldives; some 5,000 Americans visit the Maldives annually. The Maldives welcomes foreign investment, although the ambiguity of codified law acts as somewhat of a damper. Maldives signed a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) with the United States in October 2009, was granted GSP trade benefits in December 2009, and signed an Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) agreement with the United States in March 2010. Areas of opportunity for U.S. businesses include tourism, construction, and simple export-oriented manufacturing, such as garments and electrical appliance assembly. There is a shortage of local skilled labor, and most industrial labor has to be imported from Sri Lanka or elsewhere. The

The Maldivian Education System²

The Maldives has a functional literacy rate of 98%, which is the highest in the South Asia and Indian Ocean region. Educational standards are also among the highest in the region and schools follow the British system of education. English language is used as the medium of instruction in most schools; however, there are schools that provide Arabic and Islamic education specifically.

Only primary and secondary education, neither of which is compulsory, is offered in Maldives. Students seeking higher education must go abroad to a university. Maldives has three types of schools: Quranic schools, Dhivehi-language primary schools, and English-language primary and secondary schools. Schools in the last category are the only ones equipped to teach the standard curriculum.

In 2006, approximately 8 percent of government revenues went to finance education, ranking The Maldives 15th worldwide. Part of the reason for this large expenditure results from recent increases in the construction of modern school facilities on many of the islands. In the late 1970s, faced with a great disparity between the quality of schooling offered in the islands and in Male, the government undertook an ambitious project to build one modern primary school in each of the nineteen administrative atolls. The government in Male directly controls the administration of these primary schools. Literacy is reportedly high; the claimed 1991 adult literacy rate of 98.2 percent would make Maldives the highest in South Asia and the Indian Ocean region.

In Maldives primary education comprises classes one through five, enrolling students in the corresponding ages six through ten. Secondary education is divided between classes six through ten (ages 11-15), which represent overall secondary education, and classes eleven and twelve (ages 16-17), which constitute higher secondary education.

² Excerpts from *The Ministry of Education* and <http://Countrystudies.us/Maldives.com>

A new national curriculum for primary and middle schools was designed and introduced in 1984. This curriculum incorporates environmental studies, science, Dhivehi language, mathematics, English language, fine arts, physical education and calligraphy. A number of English medium schools prepare older students as London GCE 'O' level candidates. The Center for Higher Secondary Education, a government based educational centre, readies students to sit for the London GCE 'A' level examinations. Maintaining an affiliation to a reputed external examination system at secondary level, the Government has most appropriately innovated and introduced a Fisheries Science Programme into the secondary school, the subject having been offered at GCE 'O' level since 1987.

As is common in other developing nations, students must travel abroad for a higher education in college or university. In their continuing efforts to upgrade the educational standards, the Maldives' government maintains education as a priority.

The traditional system of education that has evolved for centuries composed of three types of institution: *Kiyavaage* or *edhuruge*, *Makthab*, and *Madharsaa*. *Madharsaa* usually expanded the curriculum to include more subjects such as literacy skills. This system deserves credit for the high (93% in 1986) literacy rate of The Maldives. Most of the *Makthabs* teach the young to read and write Dhivehi and Arabic as well as simple arithmetic. Continuous research in upgrading the curriculum goes on.

Traditionally, education was the responsibility of religious leaders and institutions. Most learning centered on individual tutorials in religious teachings. In 1924 the first formal schools opened in Male. These schools were called *kiyavaage* or *edhuruge*, and served as Quranic schools. *Edhuruge* were only established on two other islands at this time. The basic primary school on the islands through the 1990s is the *makthab*, dating from the 1940s. Primary schools of a slightly larger scale in terms of curriculum, enrollment, and number of teachers, are called *madharsaa*. During the 1940s, a widespread government campaign was organized to bring formal schooling to as many of the inhabited islands as possible, including education for girls. Enthusiastically supported by the islanders, who contributed a daily allotment of the fish catch to support the schools, many one-room structures of coral and lime with thatched roofs were constructed. The *makthab* assumed the functions of the traditional *edhuruge* while also providing a basic curriculum in reading, writing, and arithmetic. But with the death of reformist president Didi and the restoration of the sultanate in the early 1950s, official interest in the development of education in the atolls waned.

Throughout the 1960s, attention to education focused mainly on the two government schools in Male. In 1960, the medium of instruction changed from Dhivehi to English, and the curriculum was reorganized according to the imported London General Certificate of Education. The first government school outside of Malé was established in 1978 in Baa Atoll Eydhafushi.

The Ministry of Education aims to further enhance existing educational facilities and services so that every Maldivian will have access to quality primary and secondary education and hence increased scope for higher education and training. The education system of the country is designed such that it will foster religious and cultural values though the curricula are based on external examinations that would enable Maldivian students to avail themselves to educational, training and employment opportunities both nationally and internationally.

In 2010, Maldives had a total of 73,598 pupils in a total of 225 schools: 53,156 in the Atolls and 20,442 in Malé. Of those figures, almost all of the students in the Atolls attended public schools, while in Malé the number of students attending public schools is about 50% of those attending private schools. Nationwide the breakdown for primary school, secondary and higher secondary school enrollment 44, 357, 25,997, and 3,244 respectively. The male-female ratio is similar at the primary level and only slightly fewer women than men at the secondary and higher secondary levels.

Among the major challenges before the state in the sphere of education are the following:

- Regionalization of the education system
- The establishment of a National University and whether or not to integrate the Islamic higher secondary school, Kulliyaa, into the National University.
- Improvement in the number of secondary school students who pass their 'O' Level exams
- Improvement in the teacher training and education

Higher Secondary Education

In the early 1990s, secondary education was available only in Male's English-medium schools, which had also preschool and primary-level offerings. Dhivehi-medium schools existed, but most were located in Male. These schools were private and charged a fee. In 1992 the first secondary school outside Male opened on Addu Atoll.

In 1975 the government, with international assistance, started vocational training at the Vocational Training Center in Male. The training covered electricity, engine repair and maintenance, machinery, welding, and refrigeration. Trainees were chosen from among fourth- and fifth-grade students. In the atolls, the Rural Youth Vocational Training Program provided training designed to meet local needs in engine repair and maintenance, tailoring, carpentry, and boat building. On the island of Mafuri on Male Atoll, a large juvenile reformatory also offered vocational training. Established by the Ministry of Home Affairs in 1979, the reformatory provided training courses in electrical and mechanical engineering, carpentry, welding, and tailoring, as well as a limited primary school academic curriculum.

International organizations enabled the creation of the Science Education Center in 1979 and an Arabic Islamic Education Center opened in 1989. Japanese aid enabled the founding of the Maldives Center for Social Education in 1991. In the latter half of 1993, work began on the Maldives Institute of Technical Education to help eliminate the shortage of skilled labor. A milestone in educational services was reached with the recent establishment of the Maldives College of Higher Education - MCHE in 1998. Maldivian students now have the prospect of post secondary education (from diplomas to bachelor's degrees in certain areas) at the many faculties functioning under the MCHE. In 2010, the total enrollment for higher secondary education was 3,244, which represents approximately 12% of the number of students who completed secondary education. There are 38 schools offering higher secondary education – 4 in Malé and 34 in the Atolls of which 1 is private and the rest public.

Higher Education Centers

1. Villa College
2. MAPS Institute
3. IBS City Campus
4. Mandhu College

5. Cyrix College
6. Focus Education Center
7. Maldives College of Higher Education
8. Clique College
9. Kulliyathul Dhiraasaathul Islamiyya
10. Maldives Institute of vocational Education & Training (MIVET)

The **Maldives National University** [Dhivehi](#) is the first university to be opened in the [Maldives](#). Inaugurated on February 15, 2011, the university was previously known as the **Maldives College of Higher Education** which was established on January 1, 1999, as part of a restructuring and rationalization of all government-run post-secondary education in [Maldives](#). Operated under the aegis of the Department of Higher Education and Training, MCHE is the only public degree-granting institution on the island. The college offers a range of degrees, diplomas, and certificates, with particular emphasis on engineering, health science, education, tourism, and management. The average enrollment at MCHE is around 4,000 students in long-term (that is, more than one academic year) programs, and around 2,000 in short-term (shorter than one academic year) courses. The college is administered by a council called College Council, headed by Ms. Zeenaz Hussain.

History

MCHE was established in 1998, though what is today known as MCHE was there since 1973 as Allied Health Services Training Centre which later was renamed as Faculty of Health Sciences established by the Ministry of Health.

Faculties

- Faculty of Arts
- Faculty of Education
- Faculty of Engineering Technology
- Faculty of Health Sciences
- Faculty of Hospitality and Tourism Studies
- Faculty of Islamic Studies
- Faculty of Management and Computing
- Faculty of Shari'ah and Law
- Centre for Maritime Studies
- Centre for Open Learning

Pre-departure

Official Grant Documents

Research and Lecturing Scholars are advised to confirm the duration of their grants with CIES and the US Embassy.

The issuance of the official grant document formalises your status as a Fulbright grantee, however your grant is contingent upon satisfactory medical clearance.

ECA will issue you three copies of the official grant document, which needs to be signed by you.

NOTE: Please sign all three copies. Keep one for your records, send one to IIE (in the case of student scholars) or CIES (in the case of research and lecturing scholars) and; under no circumstance should you leave for the Maldives without signing and returning your grant document to the US Embassy. Also, please make sure you get confirmation that your signed grant document has been received by the Public Affairs Section

For details on the grants made to scholars, please see the section on *Money Matters*.

Obtaining your Visa

To enter the Maldives, no pre-arrival visa is required. A thirty day free visa is issued on arrival for all Nationalities, provided that the following conditions are met: However, the US embassy will send a copy of the passport and CV of US Scholar to the Foreign Ministry and obtain an entry visa.

- Should possess a valid passport and
- Have a valid ticket to continue the journey out of Maldives and
- Have enough funds to cover the expenses for duration of the stay in Maldives (US \$100 + \$50 per day) or a confirmation of reservation in a Tourist Resort or a hotel.

Employment is strictly PROHIBITED under this category.

More information can be found at www.immigration.gov.mv



Travel

Our travel regulations make it necessary for you to travel via the most direct route from your home city to Malé, Maldives and on US flag carriers whenever they operate en-route. You should arrange for a stop over in Colombo for a briefing by the Public Affairs Officer/Cultural Affairs Officer.

NOTE: Arrange your travel itinerary (with a travel agent or through an airline), by the most direct route, from nearest your home to Malé, Maldives (Malé International

Airport). Include detailed flight information, stopovers and arrival (date and time) in Maldives.

Things to Bring³

Suggestions for clothing and packing list

Dress is generally informal but you should be sensitive to local dress standards when visiting inhabited islands. Nudism and topless sunbathing are prohibited throughout Maldives including on resort islands.

Formal wear

Cotton clothes and leather footwear are by far the best option for anyone living in a tropical country such as Maldives.

Women

Dresses, skirts, blouses/shirts, pants and shalwars are expected and appropriate for work. Try to ensure dresses etc. are of a modest design - not too short, revealing or see through (unless you want to wear an under slip). It is easy to feel uncomfortable in the "wrong" clothes. Most women seem to prefer loose dresses, as these are more comfortable in the heat.

Reasonably modest dress is appropriate in Male' – shorts should cover the thighs and shirts should not be very low cut. In more out-of-the way parts of the country, quite conservative dress is in order.

Men

Shirts, trousers, shoes and socks are good enough for most formal occasions - even weddings. You may want to bring a jacket just in case but this is not essential (especially since it can often be uncomfortably hot), but many scholars have their jackets and suites tailored in. Short-sleeved loose cotton shirts are the most comfortable and are very easy and cheap to buy here. On the other hand, bring lightweight cotton trousers with you. Ties are not usually required at work but it is worth having a selection for important functions.

Casual wear

What is inappropriate?

Usually very tight T-shirts and trousers (although leggings **are** worn here if covered by a long, loose T-shirt); transparent clothes; shorts (especially for women) although Bermuda shorts are acceptable for men; very short dresses. However, on some beaches, city centres and at tourist resorts the same restrictions do not apply.

³ Adapted from the VSO Sri Lanka Postings Pack, Lonely Planet, British FCO

Other Things to Pack

Toiletries

Most types of toiletries are available although imported brands can be expensive. Local brands are cheap and readily available.

The following is worth bringing since you may not have the time or inclination to brave the shops at first. However, except where specified, all these items are available around the island.

Insect repellent	Difficult to buy here (especially those not containing DEET), although the herbal citronella oil is readily available.
After-bite care	You will get bitten!
Shaving equipment	Better to bring battery operated than mains operated
Tampons	Available in shops in Male' but quite expensive and offers no choice, so worth bringing plenty
Contact lens fluid	Expensive and only available in a few places, so bring plenty (a spare pair of contacts is a good idea as well)
Contraceptive pills	Available over-the-counter but different brands to those available in Europe/Canada/USA
Deodorants Skin care products	Both local and imported products are available, the latter of course, are expensive
Small battery operated hand-held fan	Ideal for when you are sweltering in the heat.
Sunblock	It is strongly recommended that you bring a plentiful supply with you - the sun is fierce here and sun block, when available, is expensive and offers little choice.

Other Cont'd

Towels	One or two thin ones (can easily be bought here). Thick towels don't dry and therefore smell. – Available in Sri Lanka.
Travel alarm clock	Plastic lasts longer.
Swiss Army Penknife	Don't leave home without one.
Small hold-all/frameless rucksack	Essential but can be bought here.
Sunglasses	Available but either expensive or low quality.
Camera	Sealable plastic bags are good for cameras and keeping damp out. Silica gel is essential for cameras to keep the moisture away.
Small manicure set	Amazing how much gets under your nails.
Herbs and special ingredients	Basil, oregano, rosemary, bay etc. Make a nice change from chillies. Balsamic vinegar, truffle oil, sun dried tomatoes, pine nuts and pesto sauce etc are not easily available here.
Photographs of family friends,	Good to show Maldivian friends. home etc .
Sports equipment/games/books	whatever keeps you amused.
At least 2 passport type Photographs for visas etc.	There are a few instant photo booths around.
Books	The latest fiction is difficult to find.
Basic first-aid kit	Most medicines are very cheap and widely available. If you prefer a particular pain killer etc bring it with you. <i>See the section on health for more details.</i>

Those travelling with children will have a different set of needs. Good quality, children's leather shoes are hard to find, while branded footwear such as Nike and

Adidas are readily available. The bookshops stock collections of children's books, but the choice of age appropriate books is limited as are specific educational material.

Computers and electronic items:

Electricity in Maldives is 220-240 volts at 50 cycles, so transformers must be used for any 110-volts electrical equipment. Electrical fluctuations are common in Maldives and therefore the use of surge suppressants and current regulators are advisable.

The standard socket is the UK-style three-pin, although there are some variations so an international adaptor can be useful.

Certain electrical items do need customs clearance. Fulbrighter are entitled to a duty waiver. Please contact the Programme Officer if you are travelling with any items that may need customs clearance.

LOCAL LAWS AND CUSTOMS⁴

Customs Clearance

Restrictions: It is an offence to import into Maldives: explosives, weapons, firearms and ammunition; pornographic material; materials deemed contrary to Islam, including "idols for worship" and bibles; pork and pork products; and alcohol. Alcoholic beverages are only available on resort islands and should not be taken off a resort. The export of tortoise shell and coral is forbidden. Special permission should be sought to bring the personal pets (dogs not allowed).

NOTE: Alcohol is illegal outside of resorts and passengers must not carry any type of alcohol when travelling to Maldives. An official license is required for import of alcohol.

Maldives also has very strong anti-drug laws. Importation or possession of drugs in Maldives can carry severe penalties, including life imprisonment.

Concessions: A laptop computer, camera or radio for personal use, etc can be carried in your hand luggage as personal effects and will not be taxed.

Other concessions for passengers on a visitor visa:

- Wearing apparel
- Jewelry, watches and pens for personal use
- Toiletries. (Soap, perfume, shampoo and such)
- Camera radio and such for personal use
- 200 stick of cigarette or 25 cigars and 200 gram tobacco(only allowed for person over 16 of age)
- Books and Magazine used during the flight

⁴ Information taken from [Lonely Planet: Maldives](#), the Maldivian Customs Authority, and the British Foreign Office website.

- In addition to the above mention, Rf2000/- concession on dutiable goods will be given

Useful website: <http://www.customs.gov.mv/en>

Local Laws

Local laws reflect the fact that Maldives is a Muslim country and serious violations of local laws may lead to a prison sentence. You should respect local traditions, customs, laws and religions at all times and be aware of your actions to ensure that they do not offend other cultures or religious beliefs, especially during the holy month of Ramadan or if you intend to visit religious areas.

By Maldivian law all extra-marital sex is illegal although such mores are not applied to the resorts, where in practice anything goes as long as it is low-key or behind closed doors. Same sex relations are illegal and convicted offenders could face lengthy prison sentences and fines, however, it's common to see same sex-couples enjoying Maldivian holidays.

In Male' and on inhabited islands discretion is key and public displays of affection should not be indulged in by anyone, gay or straight – the Maldives remains an extremely conservative place.

Health & Medical Insurance

The only vaccination officially required by the Maldives is one for yellow fever, if you're coming from an area where yellow fever is endemic. You must carry an international certificate of yellow fever vaccination if this requirement applies.

According to the Center for Disease Control, the following vaccines are recommended as a precaution:

- Vaccination against Japanese B Encephalitis (three injections over one month)
- Pre-exposure vaccination against Rabies (three injections over one month)
- Vaccination against Hepatitis A (two injections over 6 months) & Hepatitis B (three injections over 6 months).
- Measles/mumps/rubella (MMR) vaccine
- Diphtheria/Tetanus vaccine booster
- Typhoid vaccine (especially if travelling to India)
- Polio booster with 10 years of last dose or childhood series

Malaria Prophylaxis:

Malaria prophylaxis is not necessary.

Items to Bring with You:

Medicines you may need:

-
- **Prescription medications you take every day.** Make sure you have enough to last during your trip. Keep them in their original prescription bottles and always in your carry-on luggage. Be sure to follow security guidelines, if the medicines are liquids.
 - **Medicine for diarrhea**, usually over-the-counter.

Other items you may need:

- Iodine tablets and portable water filters to purify water if bottled water is not available. See A Guide to Water Filters, A Guide to Commercially-Bottled Water and Other Beverages, and Safe Food and Water for more detailed information.
- Sunblock and sunglasses for protection from harmful effects of UV sun rays. See Basic Information about Skin Cancer for more information.
- Antibacterial hand wipes or alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.
- To prevent insect/mosquito bites, bring:
 - Lightweight long-sleeved shirts, long pants, and a hat to wear outside, whenever possible.
 - Flying-insect spray to help clear rooms of mosquitoes. The product should contain a pyrethroid insecticide; these insecticides quickly kill flying insects, including mosquitoes.

Health Information

Travelers can check the latest health information with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, Georgia. A hotline at 800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636) and a web site at <http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/default.aspx> give the most recent health advisories, immunization recommendations or requirements, and advice on food and drinking water safety for regions and countries. The CDC publication "Health Information for International Travel" can be found at <http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/contentYellowBook.aspx>.

MEDICATIONS and MEDICAL SUPPLIES⁵

Nearly all resorts have a resident doctor, but otherwise it may be necessary to go to Malé, to the nearest atoll capital, or have a doctor come to you. The Maldivian health service relies heavily on doctors, nurses, and dentists from overseas, and facilities outside the capital are limited. The country's main hospital is the Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital in Male'. Male' also has the ADK Private Hospital which offers high-quality care at high prices. Neither has a trauma unit. The capital island of each atoll has a government hospital or at least a health center – these are being improved, but for any serious problem you will have

⁵ Content taken from *Lonely Planet: Maldives*

to go to Male'. Patients requiring specialist operations may have to be evacuated to Colombo or Singapore, or taken home.

While in Maldives you should take precautions to avoid sunburn and dehydration.

The facilities of the US Embassy Health Unit are not available to Fulbright Grantees. However the unit may be able to advise you on appropriate care and action if you have a medical related query. Please contact the Public Affairs Officer or the Cultural Affairs Officer in an emergency or the Health Unit directly on 94 11 249 8633.

Medical insurance - Accident and Sickness Program for Exchanges (ASPE)

The US Department of State provides basic medical insurance to all Fulbright Scholars for the entire period of the grant. Although the insurance cover most medical conditions that are not pre-existing, grantees are advised to retain their private health insurance coverage or to take additional insurance to provide benefits not offered by the Agency's basic policy.

In the event that emergency medical evacuation (MEDEVAC) of an exchange grantee is required, and the grantee does not have insurance to cover medical evacuation costs, the Department of State will pay the expenses of the medical evacuation.

Please note that local healthcare providers do not accept insurance cards such as ASPE. You will be required to pay by cash or credit card (if the provider accepts credit cards) and claim from ASPE later.

Useful websites:

<http://www.cdc.gov>

<http://www.astmh.org>

<http://www.tripprep.com>

<http://exchanges.state.gov/aspe>

Diplomatic Pouch INSTRUCTIONS FOR SHIPMENT OF BOOKS AND EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS BY FULBRIGHT SCHOLARS

American Fulbright grantees wishing to send books and educational materials to certain countries of assignment via the diplomatic pouch may do so on a one-time (outbound ONLY) basis, if authorized by the Public Affairs Section of the American Embassy in that country. Use of the diplomatic pouch is a privilege which, if abused, can be withdrawn by the U.S. Department of State. It is important that grantees and foundations/commissions adhere to the rules governing use of the pouch.

The pouch may not be used for return shipments to the United States.

CONTENTS:

Packages must contain only books, magazines, notes or other similar educational materials required for the grantees' teaching or research program overseas. Packages may not contain personal effects of any kind. The Department of State may open packages suspected of containing prohibited items. If prohibited items are discovered, the box will be returned to the sender. Grantees should not enclose items that are irreplaceable. There is no way to trace items lost in the pouch system. Department of State does not assume responsibility for lost or damaged packages. Grantees should not ship anything that will be damaged by x-rays.

NUMBER OF PACKAGES:

No more than four boxes per grantee may be sent through the pouch system. For number of boxes allowed for each country, please see page 3.

WEIGHT AND SIZE LIMITATIONS:

Each box must not exceed 24" in length and total length and girth must not exceed 62". Measure longest side or length then girth, around two shortest sides, to obtain total length and girth. Each box cannot exceed 40 pounds.

Boxes rejected by the Department of State because of improper size, contents, or packaging will be returned to the sender.

WRAPPING:

Materials must be packed securely in strong cardboard boxes sealed with heavy-duty packing tape (strapping tape is best), and clearly labelled. Boxes should be packed carefully since torn or broken packages will not be repacked by the mailroom.

ADDRESSING THE PACKAGE:

Return address (upper left-hand corner): Name
Street Address
City, State, Zip

Mailing Address: Public Affairs Officer
Department of State
6100 Colombo Place
Washington, D.C. 20521- (plus 4-digit zip code; see p. 3)

Example

**Public Affairs Officer
Department of State
6100 Colombo Place
Washington, D.C. 20521-
6110**

In lower left-hand corner
UNCLASSIFIED VIA AIR POUCH
of the box write: Your Name
FULBRIGHT SCHOLAR EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

NOTE: Please choose a return address where the recipient will know how to contact you and what to do if packages are returned.

Grantees sending only one package should write "1 of 1" in the lower right-hand corner. Grantees sending more than one package should number each package in a series and circle the markings, e.g., "1 of 3", "2 of 3" and "3 of 3".

SHIPPING

Grantees are responsible for paying domestic postage from their home to Washington, D.C.

TIME REQUIRED FOR SHIPMENT

Grantees should anticipate that once packages are received at the Department of State, shipping time will take from four to eight weeks, sometimes longer, to arrive in the country of assignment. The frequency of pouch shipment is outside the control of the Department of State or the receiving U.S. Embassy or Consulate.

**Department of State Pouch Zip Code List - Selected Cities in
the Middle East and South Asia**

Country: Capital in bold	# of Boxes allowed	4-digit zip code
BANGLADESH: Dhaka	4	20521- 6120
EGYPT: Cairo	4	20521- 7700
INDIA: New Delhi	4	20521- 9000
INDIA: Mumbai (Bombay)	4	20521- 6240
INDIA: Calcutta	4	20521- 6250
INDIA: Chennai (Madras)	4	20521- 6260
JORDAN: Amman	4	20521- 6050
MOROCCO: Rabat	4	20521- 9400
NEPAL: Kathmandu	4	20521- 6190
OMAN: Muscat	4	20521- 6220
PAKISTAN: Islamabad	4	20521- 8100
QATAR: Doha	4	20521- 6130
SRI LANKA: Colombo	4	20521-6100
SYRIA: Damascus	3	20521-6110
TUNISIA: Tunis	2	20521- 6360
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES: Abu Dhabi	4	20521- 6010
YEMEN: Sanaa	4	20521- 6330

Example 

Public Affairs Officer
Department of State
6100 Colombo Place
Washington, D.C. 20521-6110

For inquiries about use of the diplomatic pouch write to: howardpb@state.gov

Pouch address for Sri Lanka:
Name of Grantee
 AmEmbassy Colombo
 Department of State
 6100 Colombo Place
 Washington, D. C. 20521-6100

Books:

Healthy Travel Asia & India	Dr Isabella Young
Maldives – Kingdom of a Thousand Islands	Andrew Forbes
The Maldivian Mystery (although mostly discredited now)	Thor Heyerdahl
Maps of Maldives	Water Solutions
Maldives	Lonely Planet
Practical Divehi	M. Zuhair
<u>Women, War and Peace in South Asia : Beyond Victimhood to Agency</u>	by Rita Manchanda (Editor)

Internet Websites

News:

- www.haveeru.com - print copy also available and has the highest circulation in Maldives
- www.minivannews.com

Travel:

- <http://www.maldivesinfo.gov.mv/home/index.php>
- www.visitmaldives.com
- <http://www.visitmaldives.com/downloads/vguide09/vguide2009.pdf>
- <http://www.maldivian.aero/>
- www.lonelyplanet.com/maldives
- www.mymaldives.com

Miscellaneous:

- <http://www.loc.gov/rr/international/asian/maldives/maldives.html>
- http://www.maldivesroyalfamily.com/pdf/maldives_dictionary_1.0.pdf (English-Dhivehi dictionary)
- <http://www.presidencymaldives.gov.mv/>
- http://www.buyusainfo.net/docs/x_253350.pdf (Doing Business in Maldives – US Chamber of Commerce)

Shopping:

- www.ibay.com/mv (Online Classified Listings)

In Country

Tavel in the Maldives

Foreigners must have an Inter-Atoll Travel Permit to visit or stay on any inhabited island other than Malé, the islands around Malé and a resort island. The exception is if you're making a day trip, either from a resort or from Malé, in which case you need to leave the island by sundown. The permit will specify which atolls or islands you can visit. As soon as you land on an island you must go to the island office to present the permit. A foreigner travelling in the outer atolls without a permit, or breaching its conditions, can be fined Rf100.

Permits are issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs in Malé and cost Rf10. Permits are issued only between 8:30 am and 11 am on all days except government holidays.

All foreigners must have a local sponsor who will guarantee their accommodation and be responsible for them. Note also that it is illegal for anyone to request payment for accommodation on an inhabited island. Travel between islands is by boat or seaplane, and many of these services stop before sunset.

In the Atolls

Only near the southern end of this natural coral barricade do two open passages permit safe ship navigation from one side of the Indian Ocean to the other through the territorial waters of Maldives. For administrative purposes the Maldives government organized these atolls into nineteen administrative divisions.

The largest island of Maldives is Gan, which belongs to Laamu Atoll or Hahdhummathi Maldives. In Addu Atoll the westernmost islands are connected by roads over the reef and the total length of the road is 14 km.

Arrival

You will be met at the airport by the Locally Employed Staff member of the American Corner Male' or by one of our representatives and taken to a guesthouse/hotel in Male'.

Jet Lag⁶

Whether or not the travel is for business or pleasure, jet lag can make anyone feel out of sorts. Headache, tiredness during the day, or insomnia at night from jet lag can be especially bothersome to those with busy schedules, which do not afford a day or two of rest following a long distance trip. Generally, travel from west to east produces more symptoms of jet lag than the same time zone change when traveling the opposite direction.

⁶ Courtesy, *Health and Medical Information*, US Embassy, Colombo.

In order to lessen jetlag, many experts recommend that the traveler adopt the new local hours for sleeping and for being awake before arriving at the new location. This can be facilitated by shifting one's schedule by an hour or so at least several days before traveling. The correct timing of meals might also be useful, although a much-touted anti-jet lag diet has not been fully evaluated. Dehydration, which can be worsened by consuming alcoholic beverages, is a common problem after a long plane ride. One should avoid all alcoholic beverages and consume more than the usual amount of other beverages, such as juices and water. Many experts recommend avoiding caffeinated beverages, whereas there are some that feel caffeine may help to adapt to the new time zone when taken at the correct time. Dehydration can also cause constipation, so a diet rich in fiber may help avoid this as well.

To prevent tired or sore muscles, a number of stretching exercises can be performed while sitting or standing in the plane. In addition, exercise is a way to stimulate metabolism and mental alertness. The use of sleeping pills (or alcohol for a similar effect) should be avoided. These can often cause prolonged effects that may decrease concentration, memory, and affect other areas of performance, which are important, especially if one has to work shortly after arrival.

Coping with the Tropical Climate⁷

If you have not come directly from another tropical area you will no doubt experience some problems adjusting to the heat and humidity, here are a few tips that may make acclimation a bit more pleasant.

- A. Take it easy when you get here. It takes about six weeks to get acclimated. Plan on giving yourself rest during these days.
- B. Fluid intake should be increased to make up for the loss due to evaporation of perspiration. It is not unusual to lose 2-3 quarts of water by perspiration while engaged in outdoor sports and other heavy physical activities.
- C. Keep in mind that heat and humidity cause foods to spoil rapidly. Prepare only what can be eaten at one meal. Eliminate leftovers, particularly custards, puddings, etc. A great deal of diarrhea is caused by spoiled foods.
- D. Humidity, plus heat, promote the growth of skin fungus and bacteria. Since we cannot eliminate the heat, keeping the body clean and dry may prevent many skin infections. Keep the body folds dry by being particularly careful to dry thoroughly (don't forget the area between the toes). A blow dryer is great for thorough drying of body folds. Encourage your children to follow this practice. Avoid rubber sneakers, pantyhose, and other tight and confining garments. They contribute to skin infections, dermatitis and vaginitis.
- E. Use some caution when out in the sun. Sun block/screen lotions should be used even if you tend to tan easily. Maximum exposure to ultraviolet rays occurs between the hours of 10 AM and 3 PM so do limit your sun exposure especially during hours.

⁷ Courtesy, *Health and Medical Information*, US Embassy, Colombo.



What's where in Male'⁸

Male'

Malé with a population of about 100,000 is the commercial and political hub of the Maldives. It is home to all government ministries and departments, all of the larger companies, banks, communications and the key institutions that control the nation's economic and social life. Malé consists of five districts or wards; four on the island of Male', A fifth on Villingili, the island to west of Male' just 10 minutes away by boat, a sixth on Hulhumale' which is 20 minutes away by boat. The Male' International Airport is on Hulhule Island, a couple of miles to the north east of Malé.

Your Welcome Pack will contain copies of the *Maldives Visitor's Guide*. These magazines give extensive listings of *events, food & drink, nightlife, cinema, art, theatre, health & beauty, sports, travel & tours, hotels and shopping* in Male'.

Restaurants

Wherever you are in Malé, there is a restaurant, a 'caffeshop', or a 'teashop', or an eating establishment of some sort near you. Each type offers a different type of food and social experience.

⁸ Adopted from Maldives Visitors' Guide 2009

The traditional Malé 'teashop' is still the most popular amongst the locals. Here you get to enjoy local foods and are sometimes noisy with lots of activity. There are several teashops scattered around the island. If you are in a hurry this is the ideal place as they serve the local version of 'fast food'. Teashops open early in the morning some as early as 5.00 a.m. and close at 1.00 a.m.

NOTE: Local women don't go into teashops in Male', but a foreign woman with a male companion would not cause any excitement.

There are several restaurants, some of which are air-conditioned and others providing a more relaxed open-air concept. Restaurants range from those offering sophisticated international menus to those serving more localized Asian and European dishes. Some are open from breakfast, while others are open from lunchtime. All restaurants close at 1.00 a.m. in the morning.

The coffee shop is the modern version of the teashop. Coffee shops serve a variety of snack and quick meals such as noodles and fried rice. Mostly small and cozy, they offer good meals at lower prices compared to restaurants. Coffee shops open in the morning between 8.00 a.m and 9.00 a.m and remain open until 1.00 a.m in the night.

Transport

Metered cabs:

Although Malé is relatively small you may need the services of a taxi especially if it is raining. In Malé taxis charge between Rf. 20.00 - 25.00 per stop, with an extra charge of Rf. 5.00 for luggage carried. Although taxis can be hailed on the street, the norm in Malé is to call one of the many taxi centers that operate in the city.

Travel to other islands:

There are four regional airports in the country. Island Aviation operates regular scheduled flights to Gan in Seenu Atoll, Kadhdhoo in Laamu Atoll, Kaadedhdhoo in Gaafu Dhaalu Atoll and Hanimaadhoo in Haa Dhaalu Atoll from Malé International Airport. There are no scheduled domestic passenger and cargo ships, however many travel between Malé and the atolls on a regular basis.

Bookings for seats or for private charters of seaplane can be organized from Malé, from the airport or from the resorts.

Dhonis are convenient only to travel to short distances mainly because of their slow speed. Dhonis are especially convenient for diving and excursions. There are several companies providing speedboat and dhoni charter services in Malé.

Housing

Housing will be provided by the host institute. Housing is very limited on the capital, Male' and the visitor should not expect luxuries. Basic amenities will be provided.

Money Matters

Grantee allowance and the cost of living in Maldives

The currency of the Maldives is the rufiyaa (Rf), which is divided into 100 laarees. The value of the rufiyaa is pegged to that of the US dollar, so the exchange rate between the two currencies never changes. Most tourist businesses will accept US dollars in cash at the standard rate. Major credit cards (Visa, Amex, and Mastercard) can be used in Male' and every resort.

The exchange rate is US\$1 = Rf12.8

The airport arrival lounge has several bank-kiosks where you will be able to convert US\$ (cash or travellers cheques) into Maldivian rufiyaa.

All Fulbright grantees receive the following allowances:

- A monthly maintenance allowance
- A Books and incidental allowance
- A one-time relocation/ settling-in allowance
- Roundtrip airfare

And

- Other allowances depending on the nature of the grant and/or the number of dependents accompanying the grantee.

Banks and ATMs

There's a slowly growing number of ATMs in Male' – most of them (but not all) now allow you to withdraw funds from international accounts. There are no ATMs outside of Male'.

Banks in Male' will change travellers' cheques and cash in US dollars – most with a commission of US\$5. Changing travellers' cheques to Maldivian rufiyaa should not attract a commission. Banks in the Maldives are not very efficient in international transactions. It is possible to transfer funds to the Western Union agent, Villa Travels, or to the HSBC Bank in Male'.

Most banks in Male' are open from about 8 am to 1:30pm, Sunday to Thursday, or 9:30am to 12:30 pm during Ramazan.

Communication

Telephone Services:

Telephone and mobile phone services in the country are provided by Dhiraagu, the Maldives telecommunications company. GSM Mobile phone services are also provided by Dhiraagu and Wataniyya Telecoms; post and prepaid services are available. Roaming arrangements are available for customers of major mobile operators in the world.

Internet:

There are several cyber cafés located in different areas of Malé. Internet services in the Maldives are provided by two ISPs licensed by the government.

Postage & Courier Service:

Postal services are quite efficient, with mail to overseas destinations delivered promptly; mail from overseas, especially packets and parcels, is subject to customs screening and can take considerably longer.

The Maldives Post Limited provides postal services in addition to the Express Mail Service (EMS). Most of the international courier services are also represented in Malé. Parcel rates can be quite expensive and will have to clear customs at the main post office.

Health

Allison Busch, in *Tips for Visitors to South Asia*, gives the following advice on health:

“Wash hands frequently using sanitizer or antibacterial soap. The former is not available in Maldives the latter is (common brand names include Dettol and Savlon).

Avoid street food, no matter how tempting.

Avoid fruits and vegetables that can't be peeled. If you cannot resist eating unpeeled produce treat it first for 20 minutes with a solution made of water and couple of grains of potassium permanganate and rinse carefully with bottled water before consuming.

When in restaurants eat only freshly-cooked food that is piping hot.

Vegetarian food is much safer than meat-based dishes.

IF you have reason to doubt the quality of food, DON'T EAT IT – better to be hungry than sick.

Be careful to stay hydrated at all times. Drink more water than you think you need. Ensuring adequate water intake is particularly crucial for hot season travellers.

Hot-season travellers may wish to add more salt to their food, particularly if they are active. This will guard against dehydration.

Scholars with Families

Please contact the Programme Officer if you need more information about schools and other facilities for children.

Contacts

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Your Feedback

The purpose of this handbook is to give information that will help you prepare for the Fulbright experience in Maldives and also settle comfortably into the country on arrival.

The general topics are aimed at giving you an overview of Maldives and accurate information on administration and logistics.

A combination of Facts and the personal experiences, make the Handbook specific to US scholars, but may at times reflect personal preferences of individual scholars. We hope this will add to the value of this handbook and not detract from it. None of the suggestions of names of people/organizations are comprehensive nor endorsed (or screened) by the American Center.

Your feedback on the usefulness of the information and suggestions for improvement will help us keep this handbook up-to-date and current for future scholars.

Please let the American Center (amcentersl@state.gov) know if you have:

- Suggestions for new topics/ areas not currently covered
- Feedback about the Handbook in general
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