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## Maldives: Where to Stay: Luxury: Naladhu

### Naladhu

*Veligandhu Huraa, South Malé Atoll*

(960) 664-1888

[www.naladhu.com](http://www.naladhu.com)

Naladhu means “pretty little island” in Dhivehi (the native language of the Maldives), but as soon as you arrive at this resort, which opened in March 2007, you realize that it’s so much more. Located on a private island thirty minutes by speedboat from the capital of Malé, Naladhu has just nineteen sumptuous villas—they’re divided into “oceanfront” and “beachside” categories—that were designed for lounging, indulging and ultimate privacy. There’s a main lodge and several dining areas on the island, but chances are that you won’t want to leave the solitude of your home as was the case with me and my husband on a recent trip.

The airy, whitewashed interior of our Oceanfront House were furnished with Ceylonese colonial beds, set beneath high gabled roofs, and accentuated with Thai screens and glass-embroidered pillows. The piece de résistance was the open-air bathroom, facing the water, which was outfitted with a divan, cascade shower in adjacent garden, a terrazzo bathtub and an endless supply of L’Occitane bath products (store-sized, of course). My favorite detail was the immense private pool between the bed- and bathroom, which shimmered in the same hues as the reef beyond it. Every morning on my way to brush my teeth, I opened the sliding door by my bed and plunged into the water. Many an afternoon was spent lounging on the wooden deck, watching the ebb tide exchange parrotfish for swift-footed rock crabs on the reef.

Our *thakuru*, or house master, brought and served meals at our villa, as well as prepared baths, played my favorite music on a programmed iPod and pre-warmed the sauna. He also scheduled sailing, fishing and island-hopping excursions. During my visit, the hosts, who call themselves Mr. and Mrs. Naladhu, organized a little cocktail party, which took place in an outdoor living room. Under the swoosh of coco palms were day beds and Shisha pipes: a scene straight out of a Gauguin painting. Incidentally, this gathering was the only occasion where we saw any other guests while staying at Naladhu. *Villas from \$1,220.*

**Who should stay:** Couples who enjoy maximum privacy and demanding types who enjoy “perfect” service.

**Who should not stay:** Families with children, and couples looking for an over-the-water villa.

**Villas to book:** All the villas are 3,200 square feet and have the same distribution, but the oceanfront houses are more private than the beachfront ones. I was in Oceanfront House No. 8 and found it to be far enough from the main lodge without feeling isolated. The decks of the beachfront houses, although hidden by shrubbery, are not completely obscured from other guests.

**What to do:** Activities include snorkeling, kayaking to the lagoon’s sandbar and visits to one of the seven restaurants located around the lagoon, including the one at Naladhu’s sister resort,

Anantara. Your butler can also arrange scuba diving, fishing trips and excursions to nearby locals-only islands. There are hammocks on the beach under palm trees by the lagoon, where I napped every day. Cooking classes are available upon request.

**Insider tip:** Ask your *thakuru* to prepare a romantic dinner on a nearby sandbar and book at least one private yoga class with Andre. Adventurous types will enjoy taking a seaplane to a secluded surfing break to ride the waves without another surfer in sight.

— Paula de la Cruz 02/07/2008

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