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NOT A FOLLOWER ISSUE



Where Memories Are Made

The Nautilus Maldives is a new luxurious bohemian hideaway offering such a personalised level of service that they guarantee no two experiences will ever feel the same. It's also tasteful, spacious and well priced, so no wonder over a third of their guests are already repeat customers.

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Previous spread: The Nautilus is the only property in the Maldives that's part of the prestigious Relais & Chateaux association. **Opposite:** Given everyone gets their own pool, access to the ocean and an abundance of space in their private villas, it's rare that you come across other guests. **This page, top:** Except at sunset that is, when most people emerge around the normally deserted pool for a complimentary happy hour. **Middle:** Ocaso is an outdoor grill restaurant with Japanese, Peruvian, and Mexican fare. **Bottom:** The overwater villas come with a glass floor panel so you can spot tropical fish swimming in the gorgeous water below.



What's the point of travelling to some far-flung idyllic tropical getaway if you can't share it on Instagram, right? I mean, if you don't feel hashtag blessed in a dopamine-inducing paradise like Maldives, are you even alive? And if someone else doesn't get jelly about it, can you even enjoy it?

All jokes aside, I'm actually a firm believer in the transformative power of experiential travel and I'm quite sure that impressing others with a staged moment (especially if it's captured by the services of an Instagram butler – yup, they exist) can never live up to the thrill of making authentic memories with your loved one(s). Luckily, this is also the philosophy of The Nautilus, one of the newest resorts to open in the Maldives. And it's wonderfully refreshing how they truly get that experiential travel is the pursuit of immersing yourself in the essence of a destination to create memories – not snapshots. But, first, let me offer a little context.

You see, 2022 marks a half-century since the very first resort opened in the little archipelagic nation that is the Maldives. Back then, guests had to wade through waist-high water to get ashore. Over these intervening years, the country has gone from a little-known place (that the UN classified as unsuitable for tourism, no less), to a globally renowned destination with 164 resorts and a combined 39,064 operational beds. But, if we really are talking experiential travel then you'd be right to ask the question of whether tourists should travel halfway around the world to somewhere they'll only ever skim the surface of (remember, resort islands offer little chance to discover the local culture, meet Maldivians or understand anything about the country and its strict Islamic faith). On the other hand, there must be a reason why, in (pre-pandemic) 2019 alone, the Maldives managed to attract 1.7 million tourists, helping contribute to over 56 per cent of its GDP. The answer is simple enough: instead of trying to tie the 1,200 islands of the Maldives together, they created a one-island-one-resort template that allows each resort to make its own rules (such as allowing bikinis)▶



Left: Thyme is where we would enjoy a shaded breakfast on the beach every morning. **Below:** Everything can be tailored to you, even your preference for Hermès or Penhaligon's soaps. **Opposite:** This shot shows Zeytoun (with its overwater tables) to the left, the spa (we loved the Maison Caulières treatment combining Swedish and Thai massage, and the oxygenated anti-ageing facial) to the right and, at the top, you'll see an island that's unused for now but will accommodate tennis courts in time. **Bottom right:** Nautilus has its very own sea plane.



and alcohol), while also offering customers that feeling of being in a natural self-isolated paradise. What this smart move did was put the burden of investment and infrastructure development in the hands of the private sector. Of course, the use of seaplanes to link all the remote islands was also important but the country still needed a novel way to market itself, and that came in the form of Instagram, which has helped disseminate the dazzle of their sugar-white sands and swaying palm-fringed coral lagoons.

Yet, in a country with a myriad of paradise destinations, how does one stand out above the others? For The Nautilus the answer was by being smart. First, they chose to develop a very small island, which allowed them to create one of the most exclusive getaways in all the Maldives, with just 26 villas. Next, they made sure every villa was private and spacious but with a gorgeous décor that's bohemian and unpretentious (yet also true to the island's past as a hippy surfer nirvana). The villas even match the layout of those you'll find at the Cheval Blanc Randheli with three, spacious, interconnecting, high-ceilinged, thatched roof bungalows encompassing a living room, bedroom and bathroom, all of which lead onto a private deck, large pool and access to the sea, but – and this is significant – at a 25 per cent price reduction. And, that's not all. At The Nautilus, they foster a belief that time stands still. Basically, there are no clocks and no set opening times, meaning you can eat whenever you want, wherever you want. Feel like breakfast for dinner, dessert in bed, or even a foot massage at 3am next to your pool? No problem is the answer. Days at The Nautilus dance to their own rhythm, and narratives unfold without a script. It's a fantastic approach but also one that sets the tone for your entire stay.

It's funny but life is so comfortable in the villas that you'll rarely

see other guests, even when the property is full, as it was when we were there. This might be a turn off for some, but we had all the company we wanted and for us it was wonderful to feel like we had our own private island. Mornings would frequently start late. Breakfast would be served (privately of course) at the Thyme restaurant and then days would pass in a blissful blur of tanning, reading, snorkelling and eating. Each of our three nights were spent at a different restaurant: one time we enjoyed a very Nobu-esque black cod with our feet in the sand at Ocaso, another we did a memorable wine tasting before a candle light dinner for two on a deck over the water at Zeytoun. And the third was best of all.

You see, if ever you want to venture out further, The Nautilus is situated in the Baa Atoll, a biodiverse environment that's home to the world's seventh largest coral reef and more marine wildlife than you can imagine. For our last evening, our personal butler organised a sunset tour of the resort's local waters aboard one of their two beautiful Princess double-deckers, during which we got to cruise alongside a pod of dolphins. Then, once back on land, we enjoyed some "Netflix-and-Chill" but with a twist, as they had arranged a private barbecued-job-fish-and-lobster dinner for two on the beach, complete with a large outdoor screen and all.

Honestly, the generosity of The Nautilus will live with you long after you leave. For example, unlike at other resorts, every guest is treated to the airport VIP service, and at no extra cost. Kids under 12 are welcome to stay and dine for free. All non-motorised sports equipment is available for free. And every evening, there's a free cocktail hour around the pool in time for sunset. In short, The Nautilus is what dreams are made of. And you don't have to put it on Instagram. ☺

