Whale Sharks by Day, Overwater Villas by Night — A 6-Day Maldives Itinerary

DURATION	BEST TIME TO GO	FROM
6 Days	**December – April** the dry season, with calm seas and 8–9 hours of sunshine daily (84–88°F / 29–31°C); whale sharks are sighted almost year-round in South Ari Atoll, but underwater visibility peaks in these months. May–October brings afternoon showers and rates 20–50% lower, if budget matters more than guaranteed sun.	**$2,600 USD / person** for 2 people

Six days across three very different Maldives: a sunset dolphin cruise and house-reef snorkeling from a beachfront bungalow at Niva Kurumba in North Malé Atoll, a whale shark and manta ray snorkel safari from LUX* South Ari Atoll's overwater villas, and a final night on Maafushi's public "bikini beach" — a $70-a-night local island a world away from the $1,000-plus resorts next door — with real resorts, licensed operators, and 2026 prices for every stop.

Day 1 Arrive & Settle Into North Malé Atoll

Touch down at Velana International Airport and take the resort's own speedboat out to a beachfront bungalow in time for a sunset welcome drink.

Arrival — Velana International Airport (MLE)

Self-guided · Free 30-day visa on arrival for most nationalities

Most flights land in the early afternoon at the Maldives' only international gateway, a compact single-terminal airport built on its own reclaimed island just across the lagoon from the capital, Malé.

Resort Speedboat Transfer — Niva Kurumba Maldives

~10 minutes · Complimentary for resort guests

Niva Kurumba's own speedboat desk meets arriving guests just past immigration for the short hop across the lagoon — one of the closest resorts to the airport, so there's no need to burn a travel day just getting there.

Niva Kurumba Maldives · +9606642324 · www.nivakurumba.com

Overnight — Niva Kurumba Maldives (Deluxe Bungalow Beach Front)

From $494 USD / night, for 2 people, breakfast included

The Maldives' first-ever resort, opened in 1972, still holds its spot on Vihamanaafushi island in North Malé Atoll, with thatched-roof bungalows set directly on the sand above a lively house reef just offshore.

Niva Kurumba Maldives · +9606642324 · www.nivakurumba.com

Day 2 North Malé Atoll: Reef & Sunset Cruise

A slower resort day built around the house reef and a classic Maldivian sunset ritual.

House Reef Snorkeling

Self-guided, any time · Snorkel gear rental from ~$15 USD / day

A short swim off the beach reaches a healthy reef wall stacked with parrotfish, reef sharks and the occasional turtle — one of the more accessible house reefs in North Malé Atoll.

Dolphin Exploration Cruise — Niva Kurumba Maldives

~1.5 hours, sunset departure · From $65 USD / person

The resort's own catamaran runs out most evenings into the channel between atolls, where spinner dolphins reliably surface to ride the bow wake as the sky turns orange over the lagoon.

Niva Kurumba Maldives · +9606642324 · www.nivakurumba.com

Overnight — Niva Kurumba Maldives

From $494 USD / night, for 2 people (second night)

Second night on the beach before tomorrow's seaplane south.

Niva Kurumba Maldives · +9606642324 · www.nivakurumba.com

Day 3 Seaplane South to South Ari Atoll

A scenic seaplane hop over dozens of reefs and islands to a resort built around one of the world's most reliable whale shark grounds.

Seaplane Transfer — Trans Maldivian Airways

~30 minutes · From $500 USD / person round-trip

TMA's fleet of De Havilland Twin Otters — the largest seaplane operation in the world — flies low over the atolls' turquoise reef patterns on the way south; seaplanes only fly in daylight, so onward international connections need to land back at Velana by mid-afternoon.

Trans Maldivian Airways · +9603312777 · www.transmaldivian.com

Check-In — LUX* South Ari Atoll (Water Villa)

From $1,065 USD / night, for 2 people

An overwater villa on stilts above the lagoon, on an island resort that markets itself as the world's only year-round whale shark destination, with an on-site marine biology centre running daily excursions.

LUX* South Ari Atoll · +9606680901 · www.luxresorts.com/en/maldives/resort/luxsouthariatoll

Sunset on the Water Villa Deck

Self-guided · Included

No excursion needed for the first evening — every water villa opens straight onto its own deck and private steps into the lagoon for a first swim before dinner.

Day 4 Whale Sharks & Manta Rays

The resort's signature reason to come to South Ari Atoll: a snorkel safari built around the ocean's biggest fish.

Whale Shark & Manta Snorkel Safari — LUX* Marine Biology Centre

~4 hours · From $180 USD / person

LUX* South Ari Atoll's resident marine biologists lead small snorkel groups out to the atoll's edge, where whale sharks feed on plankton upwellings almost every month of the year — sightings run above an 85% success rate, rare anywhere else in the world.

LUX* South Ari Atoll · +9606680901 · www.luxresorts.com/en/maldives/resort/luxsouthariatoll

Spa Afternoon — LUX* Beach Spa (optional)

~90 minutes · From $150 USD / person

An overwater spa pavilion built above the lagoon for a Balinese-style massage — the easy way to fill the afternoon after a morning in open water.

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Sandbank, Snorkeling & Dolphin Cruise — Active Watersports Maafushi

~4 hours, half-day · From $50 USD / person

A local speedboat runs guests out to an uninhabited sandbank for a swim, a stop at a shallow reef for snorkeling, and a dolphin-watching run back — the same trio of stops that made Maafushi's day-tour scene famous, at local-island prices.

Active Watersports Maafushi · +9607784928 · activemaldives.com

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