

BAREFOOT IN A TROPICAL PARADISE

## BAROS MALDIVES RESORT

AT THE EDGE OF A TINY ATOLL, THE MALDIVIAN ISLAND OF BAROS RISES LIKE A HALF MOON FROM THE DEEP BLUE OF THE INDIAN OCEAN. THE BAROS MALDIVES RESORT IS CHARACTERISED BY PALM TREES, OPULENCE AND NATURAL BEAUTY – AND EVEN IN BARE FEET, NINE MINUTES IS ENOUGH TO ENIRCLE THIS HOLIDAY PARADISE.

**THE TRANSFER FROM MALE** airport to the tiny island of Baros – measuring just 400 by 350 metres and one of the most prestigious hotel islands in the Maldives – takes just 25 minutes in the resort's own speedboat. Everything the discerning luxury traveller could expect from a dream island paradise unrolls like a magic carpet: the warm, translucent water that you noticed on the approach to Male airport reveals infinite shades of blue, with deep and delicate tones blending harmoniously from light blue to turquoise to aquamarine. A line of slender coconut palms lining the floral white beach sways gently in the breeze. Beneath the shade of this green fringe, pagoda bushes with fragile yellow flowers, reddish bougainvillea in bloom, hibiscus and alluringly aromatic frangipani embellish the lush tropical scene. Living with nature, and surrounded by nature, is integral to the resident five-star resort. As part of renovations carried out in December 2005 that left the resort newly resplendent, the natural features of the island were purposely integrated into the architectural concept. The bathrooms of the 24 Deluxe Villas open partially onto a tropical garden. Bathing in a free-standing bathtub or under a gushing shower in the open air, surrounded by rich greenery, is a truly exhilarating experience. In fact, the resort offers the outdoor life at all times of the year – on shaded loungers on the beach, on a private terrace or in one of the sunlight-filled restaurants. The lightness of being begins first thing in the morning: from your king-size bed in a Water Villa, you take in the view across the terrace with its deckchairs and daybeds to the turquoise waters of the lagoon. The presence of the sea is everywhere; even in the bathroom, where natural light pours in around the bathtub, twin washbasins, separate WC and shower and the Molton Brown amenities. The pleasures of the water are also accessible even from the private terrace, where a short ladder leads down into a sea that never drops below 28 degrees Celsius. What else could a guest wish for? Well, perhaps a temperature-regulated wine cabinet, a well-stocked mini-bar and, of course, an espresso machine and daily fresh fruit in every room. Villas have round-the-clock room service as well as wireless Internet

connections, DVD/CD players and satellite TV, thereby combining practicality and convenience with style and luxury.

Alongside the Deluxe Villas and the 30 Water Villas, the 20 Baros Villas – each of which has a living area of 103 square metres – offer Hidesways-standard living in the finest Maldivian tradition. In common with all interiors, naturally warm and earthy tones are carefully coordinated to produce a delightfully harmonious whole.

From every villa terrace, it's just a few steps to a beach with sand as fine as powdered sugar. The fact that shoes are redundant here plays a big part in feeding those Robinson Crusoe fantasies. The tiny island was simply made for barefoot walks across the soft coral sand. By evening in the Sails bar, with the fine sand still beneath your feet, the feeling lingers as you relax and enjoy lounge music and tropical cocktails. Every morning, as soon as you're settled beneath a straw umbrella on the beach, the rustling of palms and the mur-



mur of the sea combine to lull you into a sense of total relaxation. Caressed by the temperate tropical air, it's time to experience arguably the best diving sites anywhere in the world.

With the crystal clear waters of the Maldives ranking among the cleanest to be found anywhere, activities such as diving, snorkelling, windsurfing and sailing are virtually obligatory elements of any visit. For those who can't wait to swap the familiarity of land for an otherworldly dive of discovery, the resort's own Baros International Diving Centre, run by Sepp Zedelmayer and Derk Molenaar, organises professional descents into the deep. Even seasoned divers marvel at the diversity and matchless spectacle of life below these waves. Parrotfish, colourful butterfly fish, grey tangs, manta rays, small reef sharks, turtles and dolphin glide through the warm waters. If that weren't enough, profuse gardens of soft coral and reefs of every colour and description will surely leave you longing for the next dive experience. In the evenings, more sea creatures await – but this time the tuna, snappers and more are delivered fresh by local fisherman and skilfully prepared by executive

chef Damian Barrett. At The Lighthouse gourmet restaurant, suspended on stilts over the lagoon, quality and taste are second to none – and fabulous sea views provide the perfect backdrop against which to savour the multinational dishes and wines. Under the moonlight, the beautifully presented specialities, all of which tantalise the taste buds, are an indulgence for the gourmet.

The observant connoisseur will soon see that when it comes to harmony and creative tension, the Australian chef de cuisine has a cool head and a sureness of touch that can work minor culinary miracles – suitably accompanied by the best wines from around the world. The Cayenne Grill provides similar delectation for the senses, serving meat, fish and vegetables in a choice of Mediterranean, Asiatic, Creole or Maldivian styles. Meanwhile the Lime Restaurant, with its comprehensive international-standard breakfast selection, ensures the best possible start to the day. At lunchtimes, the kitchen crew cooks up modern creations with distinct echoes of the Mediterranean and the Orient.

The sense of contentment which lasts from the moment guests arrive to the moment they leave is not only down to the culinary options. Sen Spa manager Penny also plays a key role with her five-strong team from Asia – experts in the gentle art of smoothing away every last trace of tension. Beneficial treatment and massage programmes for the face and body, administered by the skilled hands of therapists, bring guests within touching distance of the very essence of well-being.

### BAROS MALDIVES

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GETTING THERE: LTU operates three direct flights every week from Düsseldorf, Frankfurt and Munich

CREDIT CARDS: Amex, Visa, Mastercard, Diners Club

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# BAROS

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- 1 A glamorous start of a day.
- 2 Welcome to the Sen Spa at Baros Maldives!
- 3 Get an open-air feeling in the bathroom of a Deluxe Villa.

