

BAROS

maldives



eGuide by
Royston Ellis

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An eGuide

by

ROYSTON ELLIS

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Table of Contents

Introduction	6
About the Author	8
Chapter 1	9
Bound For Baros Maldives	9
Where is Baros Maldives?	9
Where is the Maldives?	9
How to get to the Maldives?	9
When is the best time to go to Baros Maldives?	11
What should I take to Baros Maldives?	11
Isn't a holiday at Baros Maldives expensive?	13
What happens when I arrive at the airport?	13
How do I get to Baros Maldives from the airport?	15
Chapter 2	16
The Essence of The Maldives	16
History	16
Tourism	17
The Real Essence	18
What am I going to do at Baros Maldives?	19
Chapter 3	21
The Ethos of Baros Maldives	21
The Elements	21
The Baros Maldives Bonus	22
So what actually happens when I get to Baros Maldives?	22
The Villas at Baros Maldives	25
The Baros Residence	25
The Baros Pool Villas	26
The Water Villas	27
The Baros Villas	28
The Deluxe Villas	29
Which villa?	30
The Architecture of Baros Maldives	30

Chapter 4. Dining's A Pleasure	32
The Lighthouse.....	33
Lime Restaurant.....	33
The Cayenne Grill	35
The Teppanyaki Table.....	35
The Satay Bar	36
Cookery Demonstration.....	36
Villa Dining and Island Dining.....	36
Private Dining.....	37
Chapter 5. What about a drink?	38
The Lighthouse Lounge.....	38
The Wine Cellar.....	38
The Sails Bar.....	39
Chapter 6. Diving By Design	40
The House Reef	43
The Diving Centre	43
Dive Sites	44
Diving By Design	44
Courses.....	44
Marine Biology Centre.....	45
Eco Diving	46
Snorkelling Safaris	47
Coral Planting Workshop.....	48
Water Sports	48
Canoeing.	48
Catamaran Sailing.	48
Windsurfing.....	49
Waterski/Wakeboard.	49
Sea Scooter.....	49

Chapter 7. Exploring Maldives	50
Afternoon Island Hopping	50
Male' Sightseeing & Shopping	50
Glass Bottom Boat Cruise	51
Sunrise Fishing	51
Sunset Fishing	51
Big Game Fishing	51
Dolphin Cruise	52
Sunset Cruise	52
Nooma Cruising	52
Serenity Cruising	53
Chapter 8. Pampered by Baros Maldives	54
Chapter 9. The Gardens of Baros Maldives	55
Chapter 10. The Maldivian Lounge	56
Chapter 11. Baros Maldives is Special	57
The Four Positive Pillars of Baros Maldives	57
The Baros Maldives Elite	58
Chapter 12. Back to Baros Maldives	59
Reservations	60

Introduction

Welcome to this eGuide about Baros Maldives.

If you have never been to the Maldives and are wondering which resort would best fulfil your holiday dreams, this eGuide is designed to help you.

With so many resorts to choose from, each offering much the same as each other – although at different prices – it is difficult to decide from brochures which is the best. And if you make the wrong decision, you could land up on an island that's not your cup of tea.

That's why I have written this eGuide to Baros Maldives. To give you as complete an impression as possible so you have far more information than is available in any resort brochure.

The idea is to convey the personal experience of a stay at Baros Maldives, and to answer any of the questions you as a potential guest might have. This is not a sales brochure glossing over inconvenient facts. This is a truthful account of Baros Maldives as it is today.

Since each resort in the Maldives is isolated on its own island, there is nowhere to go if you don't like it and want to check out. You'll need to charter a speedboat, or even a seaplane, if you want to try somewhere else.

So it is better to check out before making your reservation just what the resort offers, and what it aspires to be. You want to be sure you will like it before booking to stay on a small island in the middle of the Indian Ocean. Baros Maldives is only 384m x 303m (1,260ft x 950ft) in size, created by nature in a beautiful half-moon shape.

Obviously, value for money is important, but so is the overall ambience. Some resorts offer holidays at a lower rate than Baros Maldives does, and consequently the guests there may have standards to match the lower room rate. Other resorts are much more expensive, perhaps pitched for guests who don't want the simple, real Maldives at all.

A holiday in the Maldives is something special – an island experience – so if you want a slick, city break with glitz and glamour, perhaps you are not ready for the Maldives?

It's important to consider a resort's location when booking your holiday. After flying for hours from your home country and landing at Male' International Airport, will you have to catch another flight to your resort?

It may sound simple, but think of how long you will have to hang around waiting for your onward flight, and the expense that flight adds to the holiday.

Baros Maldives, on the other hand, is only 25 minutes from the airport. You could be in your villa within 45 minutes of landing while guests bound for far flung atolls are still trying to find where to catch their next flight.

And ask yourself what sort of a holiday do you want, when you are considering the Maldives.

A resort with a calm lagoon and a reef close by offering wonderful snorkelling and diving.

A resort with several restaurants ensuring every dining experience is enjoyable.

A resort with sensibly designed luxury accommodation with lots of unexpected extras adding value and complete satisfaction?

A resort that blends unobtrusively with nature, with thatched villas of timber and sandstone, sandy paths instead of concrete pavements, no vehicles, lush tropical gardens and a deep tranquillity that heightens the pleasure of being there?

And a resort that reflects the gentle charm, culture and hospitality that is the essence of the Maldives, making a holiday memorable?

When you decide that Baros Maldives is the answer and you start your visit, don't be surprised to discover that most of the guests you meet there have been to Baros Maldives before. And will certainly come back again.

In this eGuide I hope to convey the exceptional ethos that is Baros Maldives. So, if you have never visited the resort, you will be tempted to holiday there soon, joining the elite who have made Baros Maldives their holiday destination of choice, again and again.

Royston Ellis.

About the Author

British author and travel writer Royston Ellis has been visiting the Maldives from his home in Sri Lanka several times a year since 1983. He has travelled extensively throughout the islands and from personal experience recommends Baros Maldives as simply the best resort of all – for its ambience, convenience, cuisine, relaxation and diving

Royston Ellis is the author of several print books on the Maldives, including *A Man For All Islands*, the biography of former president Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, *A Hero In Time*, a novel about the 16th century Maldivian hero Bodu Thakurufaan, and the *Bradt, Insight* and *Berlitz* guides to the Maldives published in the UK.

More information on www.roystonellis.com

Chapter 1

Bound For Baros Maldives

It sounds exciting already, just thinking of going to Baros Maldives for a holiday. You're eager to be on your way. But just where is Baros Maldives, and how do you get there?

Where is Baros Maldives?

Baros Maldives is situated in the lower central part of North Male' Atoll, which is the main atoll of the 26 natural atolls that make up the Maldives. It is in the same atoll as the capital, Male', and only 25 minutes by speed boat from the airport. (But don't worry, you won't hear jets screaming overhead; Baros Maldives is not under their flight path.)

The island is at latitude 4° 17' north of the Equator, approximately 330km (205 miles) away, and at longitude 73° 26' east

Where is the Maldives?

Few people 40 years ago, when tourism started there, had any idea that the Maldives even existed. Even though there are 1,190 islands covering a total area of 90,000 sq km (34,749 sq miles - about the size of Portugal) and stretching for 822km (510 miles) from north to south and 130km (80 miles) at the widest from west to east, the islands are so small on a map of the world, it is easy to miss them.

This archipelago of coral islands lies to the southwest of India's southern tip, some 670km (416 miles) southwest of Sri Lanka. To the far west are the shores of Somalia, Africa; to the east Indonesia, Singapore and Malaysia. To the south, the nearest country is the Seychelles and further southwest is Mauritius and Madagascar.

How to get to the Maldives?

In spite of its apparently isolated location, the Maldives is in fact easy to reach with nonstop British Airways and SriLankan Airways scheduled flights from London as well as direct flights from European and Asian cities.

By changing aircraft with a short stopover in Dubai or other Middle East airports or in Singapore, the Maldives can be reached conveniently from North and South America, and Australia, as well as from Europe.

There are also several daily flights from Colombo and regular flights from India, Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur.

International scheduled and charter airlines currently flying in and out of Male' International Airport include:

- Air Berlin
- Air Italy
- Bangkok Airways
- British Airways
- China Southern Airways
- Condor
- Emirates
- Island Aviation
- Korean Air
- Malaysia Airlines
- Meridiana fly Airlines
- Monarch
- Neo S.P.A.
- Oman Air
- Qatar Airways
- Singapore Airlines
- SriLankan Airlines
- Swiss International Air Lines
- Thomson Fly
- Transaero Airlines

When is the best time to go to Baros Maldives?

How soon are you free?

Baros Maldives is ideal for a holiday year round although of course it does rain sometimes, which is why the island is so lush.

For constant sun, the period from December to March, coinciding with the northern winter, is best. Being so close to the Equator, Baros averages about nine hours of sunshine a day in January, February and March. However, even in June, the month with the least amount of sunshine, there is an average of 6.5 hours of sunshine a day.

The weather is defined by the monsoon winds and there are no hurricanes or cyclones. The dry northeast monsoon blows from January to March and the wetter, southwest monsoon blows spasmodically from May to December.

Sharp, stormy squalls can occur throughout the year but these rarely last long. The average amount of rainfall in a year is 194cm (76in), with the wettest months being May (28cm) and November (27cm).

In actual fact, Baros has no “off season” since visitors come during the cold months of the southern hemisphere, during school holidays, and any time they want to take a break off stress. Baros Maldives isn't just about sunny weather, it's about relaxation in convivial surroundings too.

What should I take to Baros Maldives?

Travel light is the answer.

It's beachwear and sandals (or no shoes at all if you like the feel of sand on your toes) during the day. In the evenings, dress as you please too, although elegantly casual is the usual theme.

The clothes you travel in are probably the most formal ones you will need during your stay.

Women should bring their favourite cosmetics and perfumes, and men their customary toiletries. However, if you forget, every bathroom at Baros has a range of

exquisite bathing essentials, and emergency supplies are available at the Baros Boutique.

Bring sun lotion and sufficient amounts of any daily medication you require.

If you have special dietary requirements, don't worry. The Executive Chef at Baros Maldives meets all guests to discuss particular diets so you don't need to bring your own box of wheat-free crackers.

If you want to stay in touch or work (horror!), bring your laptop as every villa has free WiFi connection. However, there is a free Internet Centre so you don't even have to bring your laptop.

Every villa has a DVD and music player with hundreds of movies and music CDs available free of charge. There are board games available on request in each villa too.

There is also an extensive library of books in many languages so you don't need to clutter your luggage with reading matter.

You don't even need a mobile telephone as every villa has IDD facility. Cell phones with roaming facility work well at Baros Maldives, or you could even buy a prepaid SIM card for your cell phone at Male' International Airport before boarding the speedboat to Baros (ask your boat butler where).

You might like to bring a small amount of low denomination currency notes in US dollars (legal currency in the Maldives), or in UK pounds or Euros to use for tips. Obviously, you will need your credit cards or traveller's cheques (again US dollars are the best as the exchange rate is fixed) although at Baros Maldives you don't have to pay for anything until the night before you leave

One item you do NOT need to bring (and shouldn't as it will be held in bond at customs until you leave) is duty free (or any) alcohol. Don't worry, Baros Maldives has several bars and a connoisseur's wine cellar as well as a mini bar and a separate wine cabinet in every villa.

Isn't a holiday at Baros Maldives expensive?

No, certainly not, if you think in terms of value for money. Nowhere else in the world could you have a holiday at what it costs to stay at Baros Maldives and find so many unexpected extras included. Baros Maldives is unique in the way it caters for guest satisfaction.

A tip is to book your holiday at Baros Maldives on bed and breakfast basis (through www.baros.com). Then you can please yourself where to lunch and dine every evening.

Remember, though, that top quality is assured, so compare dining at Baros Maldives to having a meal at a jolly good restaurant in your home town. And because you will be doing that twice a day every day of your holiday, allow for the expense.

Two bottles of mineral water in the villas every day are complimentary, as are many other little goodies (daily tropical fruit and evening turn down amenities). The only extra on food and beverage bills is the service charge, and that's only 10% - less than in most major restaurants worldwide. And there is no government tax or VAT added to the bills.

Of course, staff will be delighted to receive tips for any extra service they perform, but that's not essential as they are happy to be of service.

What happens when I arrive at the airport?

At first you'll be amazed because of the beautiful experience of flying low over islands apparently scattered like gems over the translucent Indian Ocean. Each one glitters invitingly in the sun; some have thatched roofs of guest accommodation visible through the palm trees; others (like Male', the capital) are residential and packed with mini skyscrapers.

You won't see Baros Maldives from the air, as the island lies off the usual flight path. In fact, you won't see the airport runway until touch down. The airport is built on its own island and looks like a gigantic aircraft carrier from the sky.

On disembarking the aircraft you will be guided by ground staff for the walk to the arrivals terminal, or go by bus if the aircraft has parked away from the building.

If you haven't been issued with an immigration card on the plane, these are available in the arrivals lounge and should be completed while you wait in line. Enter "Baros Maldives" as your address in Maldives.

The immigration process is simple and by the time you have finished, your luggage will probably be on the conveyor belt moving slowly around at the far end of the baggage hall beyond the immigration desks.

There are plenty of free trolleys so you won't have to carry your bags.

Collect them from the conveyor belt and turn back to the customs hall, which is alongside the immigration section. There you must load every bag, and also your hand luggage, onto a conveyor belt to be screened by customs.

You can take the trolley with you to the other side of the X-ray machine to load up your luggage again.

Customs officials may ask you to open your luggage if they want to check on a doubtful item. Do not bring liquid of any kind as it is likely to be confused with alcohol. If you have inadvertently brought alcohol with you, declare and surrender it to customs so that you can retrieve it from the bond warehouse when you depart.

The immigration form lists items that should not be imported. These are: (1) Narcotic, illicit drugs and psycho tropic substances; (2) Pornographic materials; (3) Materials contrary to Islam; (4) Idols for worship; (5) Pork and pork products; (6) Alcohol; (7) Dogs; (8) Gun powder and explosives; (10) Weapons, firearms and ammunition; (11) Spear guns; (12) Chemicals.

It carries the warning: "Severe punishment for drug offenders under Maldivian law."

After you have cleared customs, you walk through to another small hall where there is a bank on one side and a Ministry of Tourism counter on the other. If you have US dollars, there is no need to purchase Maldivian currency as the US dollar is legal tender and can be exchanged anywhere.

There are leaflets about the Maldives in various languages available at the tourist counter.

As you emerge through sliding glass doors into the open, the fresh air and the heat will probably surprise you. There will also be a crowd of resort representatives holding name boards as they try to locate their passengers.

Don't look for your own name as Baros Maldives respects the confidentiality of guests and doesn't display their names. You will see instead a board bearing the name BAROS MALDIVES and a smartly dressed young man, your boat butler, ready to shake your hand and welcome you warmly to the Maldives.

If, for some reason, there is no one holding a board saying BAROS MALDIVES, don't worry, you are still expected. Simply push your luggage trolley a few yards to the right and look for the Universal Resorts welcome desk.

The assistant will quickly check your name, make a call, and within minutes someone will come to greet you.

You may be invited to take a seat at the cafeteria if other guests are arriving on the same flight. This is a chance to visit the rest rooms, or buy a local SIM card for your mobile phone.

How do I get to Baros Maldives from the airport?

Within minutes you will be escorted to the jetty only two minutes walk away, for your transfer by speedboat to Baros Maldives.

Don't worry about your luggage; the boat crew will take care of it and you will see it next in your villa.

Once you are settled down in the boat, the Boat Butler will introduce himself formally and give you some safety information and details about the short ride (about 25 minutes) across the atoll to Baros Maldives.

You will be offered a cold towel to freshen up and a choice of complimentary fruit juice or bottled mineral water. Now you can relax and gaze in delight as you speed past countless coral islands with tall coconut palms swaying beside golden sand beaches.

Your dream of a memorable holiday at Baros Maldives is about to come true.

Chapter 2

The Essence of The Maldives

A string of emeralds scattered like a necklace over the deep blue Indian Ocean...

The first glimpse you get of this fascinating atoll formation confirms two unique aspects of the Republic of Maldives. Not only does it consist of the most beautiful tropical islands, but 99% of its 90,000 km² territory is covered by the sea.

There are 1,190 islands spread over 26 atolls, ring-like coral formations enclosing a massive central lagoon, which gives the Maldives its unique paradise-like appearance.

The islands are scattered for about 820 km from North to South, and 130 km at the widest point. No island is more than 2m above sea level.

History

The original settlers of the Maldives may have arrived in the islands some 3,500 years ago. The islands lie in the centre of major trading routes and attracted settlers from Arabia, Africa and the Indian subcontinent.

Arab traders en route to the Far East recorded visits to the Maldives from the 2nd century AD.

In the Middle Ages, the Maldives was known as the 'Money Islands', because of the abundance of cowry shells found there. Cowries were used as a form of currency for trading in Africa and the Middle East, and cowries from the Maldives have even been found within the Arctic Circle.

In 1153 the country was converted to Islam by a visiting Islamic scholar named Abul Barakaath Yoosuf Al Barbary. According to legend he defeated a sea demon by reading from the Quran. The king of the Maldives was so impressed that he decreed the country's conversion to Islam.

Islam remains the sole religion of the Maldives even today. For hundreds of years following the conversion to Islam, the country was ruled by a succession of sultans.

Apart from a brief 15-year occupation by the Portuguese (1558-73), the Maldives has always been self governed. It became a British protectorate in 1887, an arrangement that lasted until 1965 when the Maldives became independent. Three years later a republic was formed.

Today in Maldives, there is a population of around 300,000 people living on approximately 200 inhabited islands. As many as 100,000 people live on the capital island of Male'. The main industry is tourism with over 100 islands having been developed as resorts.

Fishing, the mainstay of traditional island life, still provides a sizeable proportion of the gross domestic product and job opportunities for the vast majority of the population. Traditional trades such as boat building and handicrafts are also sources of employment, as are commerce and government services.

The local language of the Maldives is Dhivehi, a unique mixture of Sanskrit and Arabic. The script is written from right to left in common with Arabic. English is also widely spoken and many Maldivian schools teach in English.

Maldivians are a friendly, hospitable and peace loving people. There is a tradition of strong family ties, and often extended families live together to provide support for each other.

Tourism

A frequently used slogan to entice visitors to the Maldives describes the holiday experience in the islands as “the sunny side of life.”

It's much more than that.

The Maldives is home to an industrious, devout people who have been moulded by centuries of isolation into a calm self-sufficiency. That does not mean the islands and the people are stuck in time past. Maldivians have been quick but cautious in embracing the modern world, adapting smoothly to fast-changing and ever-evolving new circumstances.

An old timer, considering the number of tourists visiting the islands (which has grown from 3,790 tourists and seven resorts in 1973 when Baros Maldives was opened to more than 600,000 tourists staying in more than 100 resorts in 2010) said: “Maldives has not got into the world; the world has got into Maldives.”

Maldivians are hospitable people and welcome guests who respect the traditional lifestyle of the islands. Yet they are happy to embrace new technology, new developments, and the new career opportunities that sustainable tourism brings.

The Real Essence

The essence of the Maldives is a distillation of many elements drawn from a culture of faith and an awareness of the blessings and perils of nature, with a drop of pragmatism.

The spiritual essence is rooted in respect, discipline and ritual. The physical essence stems from adaptation to the natural environment.

For the visitor on holiday, the essence of the Maldives is simply:

- Sun, sea and sand, and a celebration of the good things in life.
- Coral islands with palm-fringed beaches set in glimmering lagoons.
- Snorkelling or diving to discover living reefs and exotic fish.
- Lush tropical vegetation with no dangerous wildlife.
- Sensibly designed accommodation created in an environmentally-compatible manner.
- Warm hospitality, welcome tranquillity, and blissful seclusion.
- Islands of dreams, romance, and breathtaking beauty.
- A quietly determined people loyal to their friends and proud of their country.

At Baros Maldives, added to this essence is:

- A generous helping of culinary genius incorporating island produce and seafood utilising the finest ingredients from around the world, to create a fusion of regional and classic cuisine served in a range of superb restaurants.

- A splash of underwater exploration at Divers Baros Maldives and a dash of varied overwater activities.
- A measure of the finest wine, best spirits and everything else to delight the connoisseur.
- An exuberance of dedicated attention to detail, mixed with a genuine desire to see every guest enjoys sheer holiday fulfilment.
- A touch of magic and revitalisation of the body and spirit at the iconic Spa.
- A modicum of sweet mood music under the stars for special occasions.
- A blend of every essential element to make a holiday at Baros Maldives pure perfection.

The real essence of the Maldives awaits discovery at Baros Maldives.

What am I going to do at Baros Maldives?

That's not a problem.

If you are used to a hectic, active life and accept stress as a normal part of your daily routine, the thought of having absolutely nothing to do might seem appealing – or appalling!

At Baros Maldives, you can lap up the sheer indulgence of doing nothing. Or you can be as busy as you wish, doing the things you've never had time for.

You could:

- Learn to snorkel or to dive; there are water sports galore; a fabulously equipped gym, and a table tennis pavilion.
- Frequent The Spa for an eclectic range of treatments and beauty therapies.
- Meditate during conducted yoga sessions on an isolated sandbank.
- Go line fishing at sunrise and at sunset, or spend a morning or evening deep sea fishing with rod and tackle.
- Cruise to neighbouring islands, even have one to yourself and your partner for the day, or go sightseeing and shopping in Male', the islands' quaint and bustling capital. Or visit a village island for a glimpse of local culture.

- Explore the resort's gorgeous gardens, lush vegetation and learn about the herbs and tropical plants growing in the nursery.
- Learn about cooking from one of the resort's Master Chefs and try wine tasting with his colleague, the Food & Beverage Manager.
- Dine in a different restaurant or sample a different cuisine every night of the week.
- Read books from the library, watch classic movies from the resort's collection, select your favourite music from the CD shelves, follow the news on Internet and from the daily news sheets.
- Play board games with your partner, relax in huge sun loungers, bean bags and day beds in your villa or in the Palm Garden.
- Write a book instead of reading one.
- Plan retirement with a visit to Baros Maldives twice a year.
- Make new friends, or keep exclusively to yourself.
- Or simply laze in the sun all day and relax in the bars and restaurants at night.

Baros Maldives is absolutely what you yourself want it to be.

Chapter 3

The Ethos of Baros Maldives

A rare privilege...

Baros Maldives is a resort that offers understated elegance with a sense of authenticity, value and local culture. A lush, tropical island set in the shimmering waters of a shallow lagoon in North Male' Atoll, ringed by a reef alive with marine life.

Guests stay in elegance in individual villas created from timber and sandstone, poised and peaceful over a translucent lagoon, or nestled discreetly among exotic blooms by the beach. They revel in romantic privacy; blissful seclusion where noise and others, exasperation and hassles, are a world away.

The island is designed by nature for a divine vacation – vivid blue lagoons; glittering sun-soaked, golden beaches; exotic flowers blooming beside natural sandy trails shaded by 50-year old palm trees. The accommodation is created by skilled Maldivian craftsmen from smooth, natural stone and fine timber. Delectable dining in soothing surroundings is enhanced with assured service.

The Elements

- A small coral island, 348m x 303m, half-moon in shape and surrounded by a sandy beach, exclusive to resort guests;
- A unique house reef alive with colours, fish, turtles, rays and corals;
- Lush vegetation, well-tended gardens reflecting the typical Maldives island ambience;
- No traffic, no public swimming pool, no motorised water-sports, thus preserving the tranquillity of this blissful tropical island retreat;
- Special occasions can be celebrated while dining on a luxurious dhoni (traditional sail boat) cruising the lagoon or on a sandbank;
- Showcasing of talented local artists and musicians;
- Learning about the local culture at the Maldivian Lounge or during village expeditions;
- Exquisite cuisine to suit every palate;
- Maldivian culinary delights and Maldivian theme nights.

The Baros Maldives Bonus

- **Authenticity.**

Maldivian owned and operated, Baros has cultured elegance and offers the essence of the Maldives.
- **History.**

The third resort to open in the Maldives (there are over 100 now), Baros has matured over four decades as a resort that sets the standards for others, contributing to the development of sustainable tourism in the islands and helping the industry and the country to prosper.
- **Home.**

Warm hospitality and genuine friendliness make guests feel at home
- **Cuisine.**

The Lighthouse Restaurant has become a gastronomic revelation as well as a unique landmark.
- **Diving**

A la Carte private and luxury diving (Diving by Design) with an experienced team and a fabulous oceanographic environment with an exclusive house reef and a Marine Centre dedicated to the sustainability of the underwater world. The first EcoDive Centre in the Maldives with Reef Check Certification.
- **Snorkelling & Watersports**

Leisurely snorkelling with your partner or on a conducted snorkelling safari to gaze at fish and corals in their magic underwater world, or energetically windsurfing, canoeing, catamaran sailing and waterskiing.

So what actually happens when I get to Baros Maldives?

Your dream comes true!

The boat butler will point out the features of Baros Maldives as the speedboat nears the resort. At first you'll see only a small, round island with palm trees leaning

towards the sea and a white-gold sandy beach being lapped gently by the azure waters of the lagoon.

In the sun a sleek, white cone, like the roof of a tented pagoda, soars skywards. This is the iconic landmark of Baros Maldives, a tropical wooden pavilion that houses the Lighthouse Lounge and Restaurant on two decks. It is a symbol that proudly proclaims all that is good about the resort. Open-sided pavilions close to the landing jetty, house other restaurants and public areas.

Because the sea around Baros Maldives is deep, close to the shore, the landing jetty is short so there is not a long walk to reception as in many resorts. The Resort or Front Office Manager and their assistants will be on the jetty to welcome you to Baros Maldives with the warmth of old friends.

You will be escorted by them to the Reception Pavilion where cold towels are offered and you are invited to sit and relax, sipping your choice of complimentary sparkling wine or fresh fruit juice.

As you glance around you get a sense of the style of Baros Maldives. From the high wooden ceiling hangs a chandelier of tropical motifs; on the counter under a glass globe is a sand sculpture. A mural carved from sandstone forms the backdrop to the reception desk. There seems to be tropical art everywhere.

As you relax and take in the incredible beauty of your surroundings you gradually realise how easy it is to adapt to the leisurely island lifestyle.

One of the Guest Services Assistants will escort you along sandy trails through pretty tropical foliage to your beachside villa or along the boardwalk jetty to your overwater villa. Guest registration is done In-Villa.

Many first time visitors to the Maldives haven't considered that staying on a resort island is not the same as staying in a city hotel. The layout is horizontal and guests have to walk, everything is on the same level and there are no lifts from one floor to

another. There are no buggies (or any vehicles) in Baros but since the island is small, getting around is easy.

The Water Villas, beautifully located on pillars over the spectacular lagoon, are the furthest from the main areas so if you don't like walking much then a beach villa might be better for you. However, if privacy with access to the sea from your own balcony is paramount, then choose a water villa.

By the time you are taken to your room, you will be amazed to find that your luggage has arrived. The Guest Services Assistant will explain all the features of your villa, and you will be flabbergasted by the luxury and convenience of it. One of the thoughtful touches is being handed two card keys for every villa so you and your companion can have one each.

You will notice immediately how peaceful the island is. There is no central swimming pool where children might be shrieking; in fact children under eight years old are never seen (or heard) at Baros Maldives.

When you try to find your way from your villa to reception for the first time, you may be surprised to see there are no signposts. Don't worry, just keep walking along the winding trail because whether you go east or west, the sandy walkway will take you there within a few minutes.

So lush is the vegetation, you will barely notice the villas nestled in palm groves and flower gardens by the beach. It's amazing that in an island so small, how easy it is to get lost – only to find yourself back where you started within minutes. Even so, a pocket map of the island is given to every guest.

Actually, the layout of Baros Maldives makes it easy to walk around. The restaurants, bars, boutique, and reception pavilion and are all located off the main palm garden, like a village square as the focus for all activities. The Fitness Centre and Spa are within a few paces while the Diving Centre is just as close, at the end of its own short jetty.

The Villas at Baros Maldives

The Baros Residence

There is only one Baros Residence in the whole of the Maldives, so it is something very special.

Surrounded by green foliage and bird-of-paradise blossoms, the Baros Residence is an intimate place to stay, to share secrets, to relax. It has a private swimming pool amidst the blooms of a tropical garden. Extra features are a day bed on the sun deck, private spa massages, a linen canopied bed; tropical timbers and bas-relief; an extravagant bathroom. A butler is on call to assure warm and willing service whenever required in this romantic hideaway.

In an area of 268 sq m are to be found:

- A king size bed with a scalloped linen canopy
- Private pool with an area of 7m by 3m
- Secluded walled tropical garden
- Luxury indoor shower and bathtub plus outdoor rain fall shower
- Luxury bathroom amenities
- Nespresso Machine with complimentary premium coffee capsules
- Electric kettle with complimentary exotic tea sachets
- In Villa bar stocked to guests' requirements
- Wine Chiller with notable wines and champagnes
- Flat screen television (40")
- Bose surround Sound System with DVD/CD player
- Personal iPod loaded with a huge selection of tunes
- Library of coffee table books
- Complimentary wireless and high-speed Internet access
- IDD telephone
- In Villa Safe
- Generous wardrobe space
- A pillow menu
- Egyptian cotton bed linen

- Deluxe bathrobes, slippers and hairdryer
- Individually controlled air conditioning and ceiling fan
- A dedicated 24hours on call butler service

The Baros Pool Villas

There were originally five of these, Number 210 to Number 214. Because they proved to be so popular, more were scheduled to be added in November 2010 with the conversion and upgrading of five existing Baros villas. They face east and enable guests to loll in the pool secluded by tropical vegetation only a few paces from the beach and lagoon.

Each of the romantic, free standing Baros Pool Villas is subtly sheltered by flowers, bushes and trees. The villa offers generous living space with a wooden deck for lounging, a shaded veranda with a day bed and a plunge pool by the beach. Its interiors are in typically elegant Baros décor with a king size four poster bed, large windows to allow in natural light, a state-of-the art entertainment system and a contemporary bathroom. These villas are perfect for couples because of their delightful privacy. On call as required is a dedicated resort host.

In an area of 134 sq m are to be found:

- Private, infinity edged plunge pool 4m by 2.4m
- Four poster king size bed
- Indoor bathroom with shower plus outdoor garden shower
- Luxurious bathroom amenities
- Private In Villa bar and Wine Chiller
- Espresso machine with complimentary premium coffee capsules
- Electric kettle with complimentary exotic tea sachets
- Flat screen (40") television (concealed in an ottoman)
- Bose Surround Sound System with DVD/CD player
- In Villa library of coffee table books and DVD/CDs
- iPod docking station
- Personal iPod loaded with a huge selection of tunes

- Complimentary wireless Internet access
- Pillow menu
- IDD telephone
- In Villa safe
- Generous wardrobe space
- Deluxe bathrobes, slippers and hairdryer
- Individually controlled air conditioning and ceiling fan
- Dedicated 24-hours on call Villa Host service

The Water Villas

There are 30 water villas offering amazing accommodation over the lagoon. Numbers 301 to 311 are facing south; Numbers 312 to 316 overlook the sunset to the west, while Numbers 317 to 330 are north facing. All are grouped around a horseshoe shaped boardwalk over the lagoon off the northwest tip of the island.

Each Water Villa is intimately exclusive with a private wooden deck for sunbathing and wooden steps for dipping into the lagoon. The beach is a few minutes walk away. These villas inspire romance; each is exquisitely furnished with a king size bed draped in silk and cotton, and has a sumptuous bathroom poised over the lagoon.

In an area of 92 sq m can be found:

- Four poster king size bed
- Indoor bathroom and shower, and bath tub with a panoramic sea view
- Luxurious bathroom amenities
- Private In Villa bar and wine chiller
- Espresso machine with complimentary premium coffee capsules
- Electric kettle with complimentary exotic tea sachets
- Flat screen television (concealed in an ottoman)
- DVD/CD player
- Complimentary wireless and high speed Internet access
- IDD telephone
- In Villa Safe

- Generous wardrobe space
- Bathrobes, slippers and hairdryer
- Individually controlled air conditioning and ceiling fan

The Baros Villas

There were originally 15 of these, although five were to be converted into Pool Villas in November 2010. These Baros Villas range northwards along the east coast of the island from Number 201 to Number 210 and then Number 216 to Number 220 all of which are north-facing by the beach.

Each Baros Villa is discreetly secluded by tropical vegetation, with a wooden deck for lounging just a pace from the lagoon. The ingeniously designed interior has a king size bed embraced by curtains, louvered blinds on either side to let in sunlight, and exotic bathroom with a contemporary tub, and an outside shower in a secret garden.

In an area of 103 sq m, are to be found:

- Four poster kingsize bed
- Indoor bathroom with shower and bath tub, plus outside rainfall shower
- Luxurious bathroom amenities
- Private In Villa Bar and Wine Chiller
- Espresso machine with complimentary premium coffee capsule
- Electric kettle with exotic tea sachets
- Flat screen television (concealed in an ottoman)
- DVD/CD player
- Complimentary wireless and high speed Internet access
- IDD telephone
- In Villa safe
- Generous wardrobe space
- Bathrobes, slippers and hairdryer
- iPod docking station
- Individually controlled air conditioning and ceiling fan

The Deluxe Villas

There are 24 of these special villas with numbers 106 to 115 on the northeast side of the island and numbers 116 to 124 on the northwest; a further five villas, numbers 101 to 105 are at the southwest corner, close to the Palm Garden.

These villas are set in flower glades by the beach and, like all the villas at Baros, have been created in a flawless style that exudes sophistication. As well as having a private veranda with huge bean bags and a day bed, each has a spacious, teak-floored bedroom featuring a king size bed .

The bathroom with a beautiful stand alone bathtub and separate glass shower cubicle extends into a sandstone-walled flower garden which has its own waterfall shower.

Like all the island villas at Baros Maldives, there are two sun loungers under an individual thatched sunshade on the beach reserved for the villa's guests.

In an area of 89 sq m are to be found:

- A king size bed
- Open air bathroom, indoor shower and bath tub, plus garden waterfall shower
- Luxurious bathroom amenities
- Private In Villa bar and Wine Chiller
- Espresso machine with complimentary premium coffee capsules
- Electric kettle with complimentary exotic tea sachets
- Flat screen television
- DVD/CD player
- Complimentary wireless and high speed Internet access
- IDD telephone
- In Villa safe
- Generous wardrobe space
- Bathrobes, slippers and hairdryer
- iPod docking station
- Individually controlled air conditioning and ceiling fan

Which villa?

Don't be surprised if it is difficult to decide which villa to choose. If you like the sea and want to be able to go in and out of the lagoon from your deck as you please, then a Water Villa is the perfect choice. However, if you like to be beside the beach and only a short walk through tropical gardens to all the activities, then a Deluxe, Baros or Pool Villa should be your choice.

The Architecture of Baros Maldives

Visitors to Baros Maldives love their villas. This is another facet of the essence of the Maldives at Baros since the villas and restaurants were designed by a Maldivian.

There are very few Maldivian architects but one, Mohamed Shafeeq – universally known as Sappé – is popular because he has revolutionised the concept of holiday island architecture. His influence is seen beyond the Maldives as his portfolio includes some of the most beautiful and luxurious resorts in South East Asia.

At Baros Maldives he has created a perfect combination of outside and inside life. Baros Maldives is all about outdoor living - The Welcome Pavilion, the restaurants and bars are all open-sided areas. The Lighthouse Restaurant is a landmark, a new dimensional structure that can be seen from far in the atoll.

The villas have large windows for natural daylight and have access to the natural surroundings. They inspire romance, intimacy and cosiness.

Sappé's favourite materials are natural stones, tropical wood and coconut thatch.

Although Sappé claims not to have a signature that characterises his designs, he incorporates traditional Maldivian building styles into his work. Sappé doesn't create a typical tourist bedroom for a resort.

"When you stay at a tropical island resort," he said in an interview published in *Open Skies* the inflight magazine of Emirates Airlines, "all you want to do is relax, enjoy and make love. I create a lifestyle more than simply containing interior space under a canopy."

To meet the demand for different room designs at Baros, Sappé returned to his roots. Although brought up in Male' and trained in the UK, he has a deep respect for remote island architecture that evolved over the centuries.

Traditional houses, with sticks and thatch for sides and roofs, gave way to sliding wooden panels and coral stone walls. Then, in the 20th century, came concrete blocks and metal sheets. But there was always an outdoor element: a place to sit and an open-air bathing place, known as *gifili* in Dhivehi.

The *gifili* was Sappé's inspiration for the sumptuous bathing courtyards associated with his designs, especially at Baros.

He draws on the relationship between the components of the traditional island homestead with open-sided living spaces, sheltered sleeping spaces, and the intermingling and free flow of one space to the other.

"The importance," he says, "is on the covered and sheltered spaces within the building, rather than the form."

He remembers being advised when he first started designing resorts, to avoid giving people on holiday a reproduction of what they have at home.

He focuses on convenience and on the importance of light and lighting to make sure his buildings are comfortable and not intimidating. He wants his buildings to be a delightful surprise and a pleasure for guests.

They are.

Chapter 4. Dining's A Pleasure

There is a story often told by the pioneers of tourism in the Maldives that when Baros Maldives opened in 1973, new guests wondered if they would have to bring their own sandwiches if they wanted to eat.

However, while visitors in the early days of tourism found they were having freshly caught fish with everything (and enjoying it too), the culinary options at Baros Maldives are unparalleled.

Combined with fresh fish caught off the island's shores and herbs from the nursery, and fruit and vegetables from neighbouring islands, are top ingredients sourced from around the world. The logistics of setting up supplies of the best of everything to a remote island in the Indian Ocean is handled by professionals.

It is possible to eat as well at Baros Maldives as at anywhere else in the world. If you have a special request, of course, allow some time in case the Executive Chef has to have ingredients especially shipped in. Storage space is limited and sufficient supplies for guests of all nationalities favouring different cuisines have to be available on a daily basis.

With the logistics of perfect ingredients resolved, the onus is on the island's chefs to produce meals to guests' satisfaction. At Baros Maldives top chefs in every discipline and cuisine are employed under an experienced and dedicated Executive Chef.

Baros Maldives, although it has several restaurants and other places for special meals (such as on the deck of a dhoni, on a Water Villa veranda under the stars or even on a sandbank), is an intimate island for dining. The Executive Chef takes a personal interest in every special order, as well as in the running of all the restaurants.

He makes it a point of meeting each guest to discuss any special dietary requirements, and he supervises exactly what is required. It is no surprise to see him behind the Satay Counter adding a special touch, as well as cooking behind the scenes.

There are sufficient restaurants and eating options at Baros Maldives so that (apart from breakfast) even if you are staying for two weeks, you need never eat the same dish twice, although you probably will once you discover your favourite.

The Lighthouse

Renowned as one of the best restaurants in the Maldives, this is the signature, the highlight and the landmark of Baros Maldives. Its stylish elegance, smooth assured service and epicurean excellence epitomises the tasteful timelessness that is Baros.

As a contemporary and fine dining restaurant of beautiful sophistication built over the lagoon, The Lighthouse features elaborately composed symphonies of seafood, as well as modern fusion cuisine. Asian and Mediterranean influences prevail in succulent combination.

At The Lighthouse, the accent is on authenticity, creativity and aesthetics. The ambience is smooth. Service is attentive yet discreet. There are several degustation menus with each course matched with superb wine by the glass, as well as an inspired range of a la carte choices.

The wine cellar, set in a glittering glass-panelled section of the restaurant, includes precious and selective labels from many of the world's most respected regions. Wine tasting sessions with an exclusive gourmet dinner can be arranged in it.

The beverage selection also includes an assortment of mineral waters.

The Lighthouse Restaurant is open daily from 19.00hrs with last orders taken before 22.30hrs. Dress code is "Island Chic."

Lime Restaurant

This is the restaurant that most guests staying at Baros enjoy, since it is where breakfast is served. (However, breakfast is also available on demand in the villas.)

It is composed of three bright, thatched, arched and open-sided pavilions by the sea, refreshed by the breeze and with a comfortable, casual atmosphere.

Breakfast at Lime is sensational, with possibly one of the best selections of breakfast dishes you will ever come across. The tone is set by the presentation of a full sized, linen napkin as you sit down.

While freshly brewed coffee and premium tea is served to the table, guests are invited to help themselves from the various buffet stations in the central pavilion, in the manner of country house dining. The portions on display may appear small as they are constantly refreshed so that even mushrooms or sausages are served hot and scrumptious.

There are at least eight kinds of freshly squeezed juices available, various kinds of milk, sugar free marmalades and jellies, various yoghurts and cereals, dried fruit and a dozen types of fresh tropical fruit, peeled, cut and served to order by the Fruit Chef.

While there are several kinds of breads and cold meats and a cheese board, cooked dishes range from Maldives fish curry to Japanese soup, to spaghetti and, of course, all the ingredients for a good fry up of eggs, bacon, sausages, tomatoes, baked beans and mushrooms, prepared in front of you. Eggs are done any way you want, from Eggs Benedict and spicy omelette to Sunny Side Up.

In addition, there is complimentary champagne galore to give the day an extra sparkle.

The menus for a la carte lunch or dinner include salads, soups, numerous tapas, fish with an Asian hint, delicious curries, burgers, sandwiches, grilled Panini and pizzas and substantial main dishes of seafood, fish, steak or chicken, followed by delectable desserts.

On Wednesday evenings, Lime goes Thai with fragrant flavours of authentically prepared Thai cuisine with an extensive range of delicious dishes and desserts, available from 19.00hrs to 22.00hrs.

It is open for breakfast from 07.30 to 10.30hrs and for dining from an à la carte menu of enticing dishes from around the world from 11.00 to 23.00hrs.

The Cayenne Grill

Nestled among the tropical gardens and overlooking the crystal clear waters of the lagoon, The Cayenne Grill is the place for alfresco dining in thatched gazebos, niches of privacy beside the sea.

There the finest quality meat, fresh seafood, and innovative vegetarian selections are on display. Guests are invited to select their cuts of meat or whole fish and, while the main course is being prepared in whichever style the guest chooses, to help themselves to the extensive selection of salads, antipasti, mezze and amuse bouches.

This is a favourite retreat for a leisurely meal infused with the flavours of the tropics, ranging from Thai to traditional tandoori.

On Saturday evenings (from 19.00 to 22.00hrs), Cayenne Grill is transformed into a venue for a traditional Maldivian feast with all the delicacies that make Maldivian island cuisine distinctive.

The menu includes various curries, spicy mud crab, locally influenced salads, live cooking of Maldivian short eats (small snacks) and a variety of island-caught reef fish. There is soothing entertainment and lots of local touches, including a Maldivian keepsake.

The Cayenne Grill is open every night from 19.00 to 22.00 hours.

The Teppanyaki Table

Every night the Teppanyaki Table opens for guests who gather around a counter while the chef skilfully demonstrates his ability to conjure up Japanese dishes of exquisite flavour. Especially popular are the Teppanyaki (it means 'iron grill') sets of starter plate, grilled fish or chicken, Tuna Teriyaki, miso soup and lobster or beef sirloin with Giant Prawns Yakiniku.

The Satay Bar

Located by the water at The Cayenne Grill, close to The Palm Garden and The Sails Bar, is the contemporary styled Satay Bar. Open daily from noon to 16.00hrs, this is ideal for a snack while sitting at the counter watching the chef prepare exquisite Asian delicacies

As well as grilled, sizzling satays of meat, seafood or chicken on skewers complemented with spicy peanut sauce, wok dishes and grilled bites are also served. Signature drinks and beers are available. Guests can enjoy dishes from the Satay Bar in the Palm Garden or by the sea in one of Cayenne Grill's overwater pavilions. At night a special Satay Bar set menu is served to the tables on request.

Cookery Demonstration

At lunch time on Tuesdays there is a chance to watch lunch being cooked and to learn how to do it under the expert tuition of the resort's master chefs.

A shaded corner of The Sails Bar is turned into a temporary kitchen for the island's chefs to perform. It's an entertaining session with a focus on typical Indian Ocean cuisine that could easily be copied at home.

Guests are encouraged to ask questions and, at the end of the session, the meal prepared al fresco, is served for lunch. Recipes are distributed to participants to keep. The lunch served is Yellow Tuna Carpaccio, Traditional Maldivian Chicken Curry and a dreamy dessert called Banana Haluwa.

Villa Dining and Island Dining

On demand 24-hours a day - breakfast, snacks, meals and drinks are served with discretion in the confidential privacy of guests' villas. No need to dress for dinner.

Guests are encouraged to dine anywhere they fancy on the island, eating and drinking in the shade or under the stars in true Maldivian fashion.

Whether it's a barbecue for two on the beach, a Thai feast on the boardwalk, a picnic on a sandbank or a candle-lit banquet in a palm grove, a dedicated team of chefs and butlers takes care of it all.

Menus for Villa Dining Breakfast (served from 05.30 to 11.00hrs daily) are available in each villa. The choice includes Continental, American, Wholesome Healthy and Romantic Equatorial (with champagne) Breakfasts.

In Villa Dining from a special menu is available from 11.00hrs until 06.00hrs the next morning. In addition, dishes from both The Cayenne Grill and The Lighthouse Restaurant are available from 19.00 to 22.00hrs.

Private Dining

You can wine and dine wherever you want at Baros Maldives. Literally.

Whether it's on the beach as the sun sets, on your villa deck under the stars, in your pool under the glow of the full moon, beside the gentle lapping of the surf in a specially erected pavilion, or even on a sandbank.

The Executive Chef, the Food & Beverage Manager and his staff like to be challenged to lay on exclusive dining at romantic venues in and around the island.

There are special menus to choose from or you can specify exactly what you want to match your desires.

These menus include:

- Sandbank Romantic Journey of the Sea
- Sandbank Ocean and Earth Barbecue
- Sandbank Gourmet Experience
- Sandbank From The Sea Barbecue
- Sandbank Breakfast
- Sandbank Picnic Lunch
- Dhoni Dining on board *Nooma*
- Private dinner on board the motor yacht *Serenity*

Chapter 5. What about a drink?

Although Maldivians are, by law, not allowed to drink alcohol and the importation of alcohol by individuals is prohibited, alcoholic beverages of all kinds are readily available at Baros Maldives.

The Lighthouse Lounge

Above The Lighthouse Restaurant, The Lighthouse Lounge is an elegant Martini and Champagne Bar for cocktails. It also serves as an intimate setting for after-dinner cognacs, digestifs and fine cigars.

Designed like a gallery, its terrace offers a 360-degree view of the ocean. There is a large telescope available for scanning the horizon.

The lounge has niches of privacy for intimate moments supported by discreet service and the accompaniment of refined light jazz music.

The Lighthouse Lounge opens for pre-dinner drinks at 17.00hrs and remains open until the last guest leaves. Dress code is "Island Chic."

The Wine Cellar

The wine list at Baros has been created with fine dining in mind. The glass walled, temperature controlled walk-in wine cellar in The Lighthouse Restaurant showcases an extensive global selection of old and new world wines.

The aim is to highlight prestigious vineyards and interesting lesser known producers. The diversity of the list, together with the serving of varied and exciting wines by the glass, makes the marrying of food and wine to a guest's taste eminently achievable.

Special gourmet dinners are held in the Wine Cellar with carefully matched wines. A special selection of the best and most interesting representatives of each region of the major wine producing countries throughout the world is available.

Wines can be enjoyed at The Wine Cellar, or wherever else guests care to indulge themselves.

As well as for sheer drinking pleasure, the wine list is also designed to complement the Chef's modern and tropical cuisine.

Guests who would like to receive the latest available wine list before visiting Baros Maldives, may contact: fnbmanager@baros.com

The Sails Bar

The beautiful beachside garden of coconut palms in front of the open-sided Sails Bar provides natural shade during the day and an intimately lit glade at night. It has hammocks and giant couches for lazing the hours away gazing at the ocean, reading an engrossing book, or simply relaxing and enjoying a refreshing drink at any time of day or night.

The Sails Bar is actually one of the oldest in the Maldives although it has been given a new look by its high ceiling and cool lighting. It has an old fashioned bar counter where guests can sip juice, beer, spirits, cocktails or wine all day from 10.00hrs until the last guest leaves the next morning.

In the evening, mellow background music accompanies the joy of camaraderie. Three times a week Sails Bar showcases talented local musicians who entertain with blues, light jazz and pop classics.

Chapter 6. Diving By Design

To dive at Baros Maldives is to experience diving as it should be – as luxurious and relaxing as a stay at the resort. That's because diving is done by design, to a pattern evolved over decades based on diving guests' needs.

The information in the folder in the villas contains an example of stylish diving at Baros. "There is no need to carry the cylinder to the house reef entry site as this is automatically done by staff..."

It gives a clue to the attention to detail that makes diving at Baros something very special.

In an article in *The Spectator*, novelist Frederick Forsythe adopted the term 'valet diving' to describe the extra luxury he likes when diving.

He wrote: "I do not like the hard work before and after any more. So I have invented valet diving. I hang around the dive shop and find a young reef cowboy with muscles in his eyelids, and ask whether a crisp hundred dollar bill would have any attraction. It usually does.

"All he has to do is prepare and haul my gear to the water's edge, kit me up, get me in and, when I come out, get it all off, carry it back to the dive shop and clean it up."

Valet diving has long existed at Baros Maldives. Staff from the dive centre are on hand so guests can relax and enjoy the unique underwater attractions – and valet diving doesn't cost any extra.

While some resorts in the Maldives focus only on regimented diving, Divers Baros Maldives specialises in diving a la carte. Guests choose what they want to do and have the help of experts, not just master divers but qualified marine biologists as well.

There is a feeling of intimacy at Baros Maldives because there are no crowds or strangers. It's the same for divers as groups are small and diving takes place at reefs where the only other creatures are fish, no packs of dive boats competing for space.

The house reef is only a few swimming strokes from the shore and within a few minutes by boat from the dive centre are 30 superlative dive sites that never fail to delight even the most experienced diver.

Divers Baros Maldives is run by an international dive master known to all as Sepp. He has a reputation as a diver's diver and has been diving in the Maldives for 30 years. He knows reefs that no one else has discovered and happily guides divers there if they are interested.

Based on his years of experience, Sepp believes the house reef at Baros is one of the best in the Maldives because of its easy accessibility and rich variety of marine life. It is well conserved too as divers are educated in the importance of protecting the reef.

"The Maldives," says Sepp, "has no equal in diving anywhere in the world. At Baros, guests can begin diving as soon as they have checked in. The house reef is less than 30m from the shore. No long boat journeys, no crowds, lots of individual attention, and it's absolutely fascinating underwater."

The location of Baros Maldives in the centre of the atoll and not on the edge where the reefs are swept by the Indian Ocean, helps the house reef to survive. The coral is constantly adapting to changing traditions and its proximity to the island means it is protected as guests are conservation-minded.

Sepp's gentle enthusiasm for diving off Baros Maldives communicates itself to all who meet him. He prides himself on having a dive team who love Baros and its underwater world.

"Since we only dive in small groups," he says, "we give everyone personal attention, whether they are very experienced or simple beginners."

He and his team build a strong relationship with guests to encourage good communication and confidence while diving. They monitor divers with professionalism honed through years of experience. Monitoring is based on the buddy system so that everyone has a partner when diving.

Fish have their season but diving at Baros Maldives is possible year round. At times plankton makes the lagoon murky but it attracts more fish.

Sepp maintains that diving is not about the weather and is possible whatever the day's weather conditions. The water is always warm too, so a wet suit is not necessary.

The dive team at Baros plan each day's diving a day in advance. They check tide, the moon, currents, weather forecasts, and use their own knowledge to decide where the main diving should take place the following day.

They consider it important to go to the right place at the right time, and they have a reliable instinct about where fish will be found.

Divers at Baros are regularly rewarded with sightings of manta, eagle and sting rays, reef and other sharks, rare fish, and shoals of small, colourful fish, thriving corals and exotic marine life.

A wrecked dhoni deliberately sunk off the shore of Baros Maldives at 18m depth has become an attraction in itself both for fish and divers. It often hosts rays and large groupers. A nurse shark has made its home in the engine compartment.

The reef at Baros Maldives does not fall off sharply like a wall in the Indian Ocean. It slopes and has easy access. Even night dives to it are done from the shore.

To people who ask what's so special about diving, Sepp smiles. He knows that whoever tries diving soon gets hooked and vows to return.

"Diving with experience makes the difference," says Sepp. He does all he can to see that novice divers feel confident. He is keen they should enjoy themselves underwater and he understands their thirst to learn and identify what they have seen, once they start diving.

"Diving has to be fun," he says. "We brief guests how to relax while maintaining a high degree of safety. After a dive, everyone is smiling. Even tough businessmen are like children after diving."

Sepp talks about the therapeutic effect of diving. "It's a marvellous experience, you empty your brain, forget everything, and concentrate only on balance and breathing, contemplating the amazing world underwater."

Some guests comment on their thrill at feeling weightlessness underwater, to which Sepp points out that diving is a good way to lose weight. "It burns a lot of calories."

Diving by design and valet diving at Baros Maldives in the company of Sepp and his experienced professional dive team, is to discover that stress dissolves in water. The serenity that replaces it doesn't disappear when the dive finishes.

Because of the relaxing atmosphere and the attention to guests' needs the tranquil feeling remains throughout the holiday. With Divers Baros Maldives, it feels good to be hooked.

The House Reef

The Baros House Reef encircles the island and is renowned as one of the best house reefs in the Maldives.

Just a few metres from the beach, the 300m long house reef can easily be reached. It gently slopes down to 20m, where large coral outcrops occur with an astonishing variety of marine life. It is a nursery for black tip sharks which can be seen every day. Turtles are regularly sighted in shallower depths.

The Diving Centre

The Divers Baros Maldives PADI 5-star Gold Palm Resort Diving Centre is located on a short jetty close to the island's central pavilions. It is operated by the owners, ensuring personal attention and qualified skilled professional service developed over three decades.

The Centre is well equipped with the latest in diving equipment and supported by a Bauer Compressor + Nitrox and 12ltr tanks. Lamps, computers, wetsuits and digital cameras are also available for rent.

The Centre's diving boat is a modern 15m luxury diving vessel equipped with the latest navigation system, oxygen, radio, toilet and first aid kit.

Dive Sites

Twice a day a selection of world class dive spots are on offer and all of them are reachable within 50 minutes boat ride. Some are Marine Protected Areas. Popular for diving are:

Nasimo Thila – one of the most spectacular dives in North Male' Atoll.

Manta Points – two Manta Points allowing the possibility of year round sighting of mantas.

Rameez Place – A reef discovered by Divers Baros Maldives.

Banana Reef – A Marine Protected Area and outstanding for the abundant number of fish and amazing coral formations.

Diving By Design

Valet diving really does exist. Guests' equipment is picked up from the Villa and carried to the entry point or diving boat and afterwards thoughtfully taken care of.

Guests are invited to design their own diving experience with one of the professional diving instructors. There are 30 dives on offer a la carte as well as private use of the diving vessel. All comforts are available on board so guests can relax in the lounge or on the sundeck before and after the personalised diving adventure.

Courses

Multilingual qualified diving instructors conduct all level of PADI and specialist courses, including fish identification, night diving, peak performance buoyancy, underwater photography and Nitrox, Rescue Dive and Dive Master Certification courses, as well as the standard diving packages.

For beginners there is a fun-filled Discover Scuba Diving course during a morning or afternoon session. After a short briefing, guests are escorted for a trial dive at the Baros House Reef. Photos are taken underwater which are available for purchase after the dive.

A PADI scuba diving course can be completed in the first few days of a holiday. This includes instruction on diving equipment and basic safe diving practice. The Scuba Diving Certificate is awarded to successful participants. They are then licensed to dive with a professional instructor down to 12m deep.

The Open Water Diver Course includes five knowledge modules with instruction in the theory and knowledge behind enjoyable diving, five training dives in a sheltered environment, and four open water dives on the reefs around Baros.

Upon completion of the course, which usually takes about five days, a guest is qualified to dive anywhere in the world to a depth of 18m.

Because groups are small, instruction is very individualised. Classroom sessions concentrate on the small things that might be overlooked, and the safety aspect is paramount.

A lot of preparation that guests never see goes into such things as maintaining the equipment to the highest standard, checking the air quality and filtering, and in aptitude assessment .

Marine Biology Centre

To raise awareness and to help protect the precious marine environment around Baros, a resident marine biologist is part of the Divers Baros Maldives team. The marine biologist helps in the implementation of a variety of environmental initiatives and educational programmes.

One-to-one or group lecture sessions with photographs are held to enlighten guests about the Coral Reef, Sharks, and Fish Identification. An extensive Coral Regeneration Programme, and Coral Replanting Programme in which visitors can take part, is run by the Marine Biologist.

Eco Diving

Divers Baros Maldives is the first resort EcoDive Centre in the Maldives.

From November 2010, the Divers Baros Maldives team members including the resident Marine Biologist, are licensed EcoDive Reef Check instructors, as well as fully qualified SCUBA diving instructors.

With this new status as the first EcoDive Centre in the Maldives, the Divers Baros Maldives dive centre offers the International Reef Check EcoDiver programme for all Baros Maldives guests.

The Reef Check EcoDiver programme allows children and adults with an interest in the ocean to learn more about tropical coral reefs.

Reef Check combines education with action to give volunteers a unique experience while taking an active role in conserving the world's reefs.

The world's reefs are changing fast, and Baros Maldives guests can help ensure that reefs are around for future generations by joining the EcoDiving Programme. This allows participants the rare opportunity to work with teams of scientists to combat the crises affecting reefs worldwide.

Guests at Baros Maldives who are novice snorkellers or divers can enrol in the half-day Discover Reef Check Course.

Guests with experience of snorkelling and diving who want to do more, can enrol in a 3-day EcoDiver certification course. This qualifies guests to help EcoDivers teams to monitor reefs worldwide.

There are a multitude of reefs to survey at nearly every diving destination worldwide and Eco Dive teams are established in more than 90 countries and territories.

Using the globally standardised scientific protocol, the Reef Check Eco-Diving Programme collects valuable data to establish the status of coral reefs.

This data is analysed and used locally by marine managers, nationally by fisheries and environment managers, and internationally by organisations including United

Nations agencies to help better track and care for coral reefs.

Not SCUBA certified? Divers Baros Maldives offers an Eco Diver course for snorkellers as well.

Guests can also collect valuable coral reef data using our Underwater Reef Guides. These are waterproof identification guides for common fish, invertebrates and seabed types, with an attached slate to mark down what is seen on the reefs.

Snorkelling Safaris

Snorkelling in the lagoon at Baros is best done at high tide. It is recommended that guests wear full snorkelling equipment, don't snorkel alone, and leave the water by sunset. For safety, when swimming from the beach, it's best to go with a companion.

Complimentary snorkelling equipment is available on loan from the Divers Baros Maldives Centre from 08.45hrs -18.00hrs daily.

While snorkelling leisurely with your partner around the lagoon is a great way to spy on fascinating fish and to wonder at the living coral, Divers Baros Maldives also organises snorkelling safaris.

One of these involves a trip in a boat a short way off shore. The boat drifts along with snorkellers enabling them to snorkel and get back on board whenever they want. Two reefs are visited on this snorkelling safari and a guide joins guests to explain what's under water.

It's also possible to go night snorkelling with a guide, allowing snorkellers to see many species that cannot be seen during the day. The coral seems more alive and exciting at night with the underwater flashlight highlighting their colours. Micro marine life glows at night too.

Another snorkelling safari is conducted by the Marine Biologist. Before this safari there is a slide show presentation on the Indo Pacific marine life likely to be seen on the tour, which makes snorkelling an educational as well as a fun experience.

Coral Planting Workshop

Covering less than one percent of the sea floor but supporting over a quarter of all marine life, coral reefs are the rain forests of the ocean. They are vital in maintaining the biological diversity of the oceanic ecosystems.

In 1998, global bleaching killed a huge percentage of the Maldivian coral reefs. With only a third of the reefs recovering, this ecosystem needs care and attention.

At Baros Maldives, the resident Marine Biologist has developed a reef regeneration programme that aims to enhance the natural house reef. It also creates nursery areas for local marine life. At the same time it builds greater awareness of the crucial role of the ocean in our lives.

Guests are invited to learn more about the project and to leave a lasting memory of time spent at Baros Maldives by taking part in a coral planting session.

Under this programme guests select a piece of coral and join the Marine Biologist in planting it. This small effort goes a long way in helping to preserve the reef for generations to come.

Water Sports

The Diving Centre is also the place to go to take part in over water activities.

Canoeing. The resort's Molokini clear canoe is an intriguing way to discover marine life without snorkelling. The sides and the bottom of the canoe are transparent so you only need to paddle around the lagoon, or across to the sandbank, to see what's underwater without having to snorkel or dive.

Catamaran Sailing. A light breeze is enough to get a comfortable cruising speed, whether you choose to sail off towards the sunset one evening, or simply gaze at beautiful Baros Madives from beyond the reef. You might even see dolphins during the sailing.

Windsurfing. For the more energetic, the warm water and crystal clear blue lagoon provide the perfect environment for windsurfing.

Waterski/Wakeboard. Even beginners can enjoy these challenging sports, which can be arranged on request to the Dive Centre.

Sea Scooter. This is a new way for snorkellers and swimmers to explore the waters - with a Seedoo water scooter. These are underwater scooters that pull swimmers along, enabling participants to glide over the surface or loop underwater in an exciting version of power-driven snorkelling.

Chapter 7. Exploring Maldives.

The essence of the Maldives is to be discovered away from Baros as well as on the island. No need to wonder what lies beyond the horizon, you can explore to find out for yourself.

The Escapes and Excursions organised for guests take into account the best times of the day and the best days of the week for exploring the neighbouring islands and lagoons.

On some excursions a picnic lunch is included while on others, like a cruise on the Baros dhoni, “Nooma,” or on the 50ft private Princess Motor Yacht , “Serenity,” can be arranged with champagne and even dinner.

Here are some of the activities that can be arranged through the resort’s Guest Activity Coordinators.

Afternoon Island Hopping

An informal cruise by luxury launch to a neighbouring island resort (so you can see what else is on offer for guests on holiday) and then to a local, inhabited village island helps puts the Maldives into perspective.

The village islanders lead a disciplined life with a school and clinic available on each one and a local headman as the government representative. The houses are comfortable with electricity and water, and there are shops, a postal agency and on every island a mosque. If an island seems quiet, that reflects the nature of the island village lifestyle.

Male’ Sightseeing & Shopping

Special cruises by launch are arranged for guests to have a day in Male’ to satisfy their curiosity about Maldivian culture, history and lifestyle. A Male’ guide is on hand to conduct guests on a tour of the capital, with its narrow streets, legendary fish market and beautiful mosque. This is a chance to shop for local crafts and souvenirs.

Glass Bottom Boat Cruise

A glass bottom boat – “Aquamarine” – is available for cruises over the reef so guests can gaze down at the corals and fish without getting wet. A guide describes all the underwater wonders making this ideal for non-snorkellers to learn about the fascinating lagoon.

Sunrise Fishing

Fishing at sunrise has always been a traditional activity in the Maldives. There is a conviction that the dawning of the new day is the best time to catch reef fish. With coffee served on board, this is a delightful way to start the day, even if it means getting up at 5.30hrs. Of course, the dhoni captains make sure there is no fishing in protected areas.

Sunset Fishing

Fishing at dusk is perhaps more convenient and every bit as memorable. The motor dhoni cruises the atoll to find some great fishing grounds where guests can try the Maldivian style of fishing, with a hand held line and a piece of fish as bait.

The dhoni captain won't be happy until every guest catches something, and usually guests do. The catch can be cooked the way guests want for dinner, or for lunch the next day. And if no one is lucky, there is usually a magnificent sunset to contemplate.

Big Game Fishing

Deep sea fishing with rod and line can be arranged any day either from 05.00 to 11.00hrs or in the afternoon from 13.30 to 18.30 on a specially designed, big game fishing launch.

The captain will use the boat's equipment to help find the best fishing grounds where you can try your hand at catching sailfish, tuna, marlin and wahoo. The crew will be on hand to help land the fish.

Dolphin Cruise

The waters of the Maldives are home to 20 different types of dolphin which makes the Maldives one of the best places to watch them jumping and gliding in their natural habitat. Cruises on the luxury motor yacht "Serenity" can be arranged in the evenings (from 16.15 to 18.30hrs) with champagne served by your personal butler as you watch for the dolphins to leap.

Sunset Cruise

Special cruises to sip champagne while the sun sets can be arranged on the custom-built dhoni, "Nooma," or on the private yacht "Serenity."

Nooma Cruising

Nooma is the resort's own traditional Maldivian 19m sailing dhoni. Hand built by a team of experienced boat builders and carpenters on a village island, it represents a combination of luxury and adventure.

You can laze comfortably on the deck at the bow enjoying the romance of the cruise while the dhoni's crew gently steer it across the atoll's lagoons. Or you could enjoy a Private Romantic Dinner Cruise with a butler on hand to transform the main deck into a sensual setting for dining under the stars.

Below deck is a beautifully handcrafted wooden saloon with refrigerator and cooker, and a cabin with a comfortable double bed and a private shower and toilet.

To really experience the old style, island way of travel, it's possible to charter Nooma for a cruise from the airport island to Baros, or for your return from Baros to the airport.

Special excursions are also available on “Nooma.” These include

- “Nooma” Sunset Sailing
- Discover the secret of the “Black Coral” reef - guided snorkelling by the resident Marine Biologist.
- Private Romantic Dinner Cruise

Serenity Cruising

“Serenity” is the private motor yacht available exclusively for special guests at Baros. Cruising on board “Serenity” is the perfect way to discover the natural delights of the islands.

“Serenity” is 14.76m long and 4.42m wide, with a draught of 2.65m, and powered by two inboard engines. All safety equipment including life jackets, satellite navigation system and radio telephone are on board. She is crewed by experienced, licensed captain and boatmen.

The yacht’s accommodation consists of a Master Stateroom with queen-size bed and ensuite bathroom with shower and toilet, a Starboard Stateroom with queen-size bed and ensuite bathroom with shower and toilet, as well as a Portside Stateroom with two bunk beds and attached bathroom.

There is a comfortable air-conditioned living and dining saloon complete with TV and Sound System, and a fully equipped galley/kitchenette. On deck there is a sun lounge area and ease of access to the sea for divers.

Special excursions can be arranged on “Serenity” according to guests’ wishes.

Popular are

- Private Sunset Dolphin Cruise with champagne
- Exclusive half day with snorkelling and sand bank picnic
- Afternoon and evening cruise for two to an uninhabited island with gourmet dinner on board.

Chapter 8. Pampered by Baros Maldives

The Spa has recently enjoyed a refreshing change in its looks, feel and atmosphere.

The entrance to the Spa Reception close to the beach is through elaborately carved wooden doors opening onto stepping stones over an ornamental pond set in a beautifully landscaped garden.

There the gentle sound of trickling water greets guests to a tranquil sanctum devoted to perfect wellbeing.

In the spacious, open-sided reception sala there is a reassuring and genuinely friendly welcome for every guest.

Classic wooden decking fringed by lush tropical foliage leads to four discreet treatment rooms in the inner sanctuary. Each has a dressing room, shower and private steam room.

Exquisite décor exuding a warm and precious serenity creates tranquillity. A view of a private water garden graced with lush tropical foliage adds to the relaxing seclusion.

Two treatment beds in each room promise complete bliss for couples. After treatment couples can enjoy the Spa bath and rain shower in the privacy of the garden.

Treatments are designed for pure relaxation while powerful botanical ingredients deliver promised wellbeing.

Guests can choose from a variety of massages, facials, body exfoliations and wraps. Knowledgeable therapists are present to recommend treatment programmes for specific concerns.

To foster further wellbeing, daily Yoga classes are held on decks above the crystal clear lagoon or, for deeper spirituality, on a sandbank in the middle of nowhere. A pavilion, with or without air-conditioning, dedicated to yoga is also available.

Chapter 9. The Gardens of Baros Maldives

Baros Maldives has always been an island blessed with lush foliage although tropical trees and coconut palms were all that grew on this uninhabited island before it was developed as a resort.

For 40 years since then constant attention has been paid to transform Baros into a tropical, botanical Garden of Eden. Fertile soil has been especially imported and laid over the sandy subsoil. Plants suited to the climate have been brought from neighbouring countries to grow alongside indigenous plants.

A team of expert gardeners tends to the garden every day, watering plants (with recycled water) in the morning and at night.

There is also a nursery where flowering plants are propagated, and different herbs and fruits grown for the chef to use in his culinary extravaganzas.

There are no dangerous animals or reptiles on the island, so don't worry about snakes.

There are some magnificently prehistoric-looking lizards, like mini dragons, that scuttle across the sandy paths when disturbed. In the sky at dusk you will see more prehistoric-like creatures, the flying fox. This is actually a fruit bat and is harmless to humans.

There are many birds but the one you'll see like a statue in the shade by the beach, is the heron. These tall, grey and white birds, are happy to be around humans but will run away if you approach them.

A routine pest control fogging of the villa gardens and island sand trails and pathways takes place for 90 minutes in the evening once a week. This activity produces some noise and a harmless (to humans) biodegradable fog screen that clears within a few minutes.

Chapter 10. The Maldivian Lounge

Few visitors to the Maldives know about the rich heritage and fascinating past that binds 1,190 coral islands isolated in the Indian Ocean together as a nation.

Whether the original inhabitants were sun-worshipping aboriginals or ship-wrecked mariners and settlers from Arabia, India, Africa, Madagascar and Polynesia, from the 12th century onwards the islanders were devout Muslims.

The Portuguese occupied the islands in the 16th century until -- inspired by the bravery of the Maldivian patriot, Bodu Thakurufaan, now revered as a National Hero -- the islanders shook off the colonial yoke. Invasions from India were repelled, and even the British were kept at bay by diplomacy in the 19th century.

The Maldivian Lounge at Baros Maldives seeks to recreate the days and ways of traditional Maldives; to give visitors a sense of Maldivian culture and identity; to convey the gentle devotion, resilience, hospitality and independence that is the essence of the Maldives.

With displays of locally made artefacts and hand-crafted traditional furniture, photographs of the Maldives as it was until tourism began in the 1970s; and the best collection in the world of ancient maps of the islands, The Maldivian Lounge at Baros reflects the very soul of the Maldives.

For guests, a visit to The Maldivian Lounge adds a cultural dimension to the perfect vacation

Chapter 11. Baros Maldives is Special

To realise just how special Baros Maldives is, you need to visit and enjoy a holiday there.

You'll be surprised at the unexpected extras that other resorts don't have, whether it's a souvenir gift as you leave, or the ever-open reception and cashier desks, and the round-the-clock laundry and the 24-hour library with its pool table.

There is also a transit lounge that guests who have to check out by 12 noon but don't want to leave the island until the evening, can use free of charge. This contains a bathroom with shower, comfortable reclining chairs for snoozing and a complimentary Internet station.

You may never be aware of it, but Baros Maldives has a 24-hour security system, including a Gurkha, monitoring the island to see that there are no unwanted visitors, prowling paparazzi, or anything to disturb the island's guests.

The Four Positive Pillars of Baros Maldives.

Just as the Water Villas at Baros are supported on pillars, so is the ethos that makes Baros Maldives the only island of its kind in the world.

These four pillars are simply

- Baros Maldives is owned by a Maldivian family, not by a foreign hotel chain or investment company.
- Baros Maldives has a history of 40 years of hospitality.
- Baros Maldives has an enviable reputation for the high standard of its food and drinks.
- Baros Maldives underwater is as superb as its accommodation over water.

That is why at any time you will find at least 50% of the guests at Baros Maldives have been there before. Baros is timeless, not trendy. Baros is definitely the one.

The Baros Maldives Elite

When you've stayed at Baros Maldives once, don't be surprised that you want to return. When you do, you will be entitled to become a member of a very special club that's restricted to repeat visitors to Baros Maldives.

It's the resort's way of showing appreciation for their regular guests whose presence gives Baros Maldives its character, making it THE resort to which guests return time and time again.

After your second visit, you will be invited to become a CLUB Member of the Baros Elite Programme, and become entitled to special privileges during your subsequent holidays on the island.

After your seventh visit, extra privileges are in store for you on your next four visits as you upgrade to becoming a SELECT Member of Baros Elite.

After you return to Baros for the eleventh time (and yes, many guests do) you become a SIGNATURE member of Baros Elite and enjoy incredible special privileges for every subsequent visit.

There's information about The Baros Elite programme and the privileges on the website: www.baros.com

Chapter 12. Back to Baros Maldives

When the holiday ends and it's nearly time to leave Baros Maldives, you and your partner are bound to feel sad. You'll feel you're leaving friends, and you are. However, the solution is easy, just go back whenever you can.

The statement of your account will be delivered to your villa on the evening before your departure. This gives plenty of time to check it and to pop along to the cashier's desk and pay it – with traveller's cheques or credit cards.

A note will also be delivered to your villa giving your boat departure details so that you get to the airport in time for your flight. The time for collection from your villa of your packed luggage will be advised too.

You can happily forget about your luggage until you get to the airport where the Baros Maldives Airport Representative will take care of it.

As you leave, many of the friends you have made among the resort's staff during your holiday, will crowd on the jetty to wave goodbye and wish you "*bon voyage*."

The boat will speed you to the airport, the boat butler will see everything is okay, and then within a few minutes, you'll be at the airport.

Your boat butler will escort you to the departure terminal. He will help you put your luggage through the security X-ray screening and then direct you to the check in desk for your flight.

After check in you have to proceed upstairs to immigration and then into the duty free lounge area where you can buy perfumes, premium alcohol, cameras and all sorts of wonderful last-minute souvenirs.

When your flight is called, you proceed downstairs to the departure gates where there is a search of your hand baggage before you are allowed in the sterile area. From there it's a short walk to the aircraft taking you home. But don't be sad, you'll surely go back to Baros Maldives... one day.

Reservations

Whether you are coming for the first time or are a repeat visitor, the management and staff at Baros Maldives are waiting eagerly to greet you.

Reservations can be made through your trusted travel agent or independently through:

reservations@baros.com

or

reservations@univsertalresorts.com

If you have any enquiries about your proposed holiday at Baros, then send an email to: info@baros.com

To see some beautiful photographs, go to

www.universallimagesonline.com/baros

BAROS MALDIVES, the eGUIDE

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*"Nothing was too much trouble for them,
and they constantly strove to exceed our expectations."*

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