MALDIVES

The Maldives are a dream destination! Who hasn’t seen pictures of these beautiful huts, looking over the azure blue sea, where you can jump of the porch to go for a quick snorkel? Perfect for honeymooners, but also for divers!

The Maldives consist of almost 1200 islands divided over 26 atolls. They are in the Indian Ocean, southwest of India. The country is affected by the tropical monsoons. The dryer northeast monsoon runs from November till May, then it changes to the rainy southwest monsoon. The North of the country is more affected than the South.

You can dive the Maldives the whole year round. You just need to be aware that the different monsoons will put the plankton on opposite sides of the islands. During the northeast monsoon, you’ll find the mantas and whale sharks on the west side. During the southwest monsoon, they will be on the east side. Best time for liveaboard departures is from December till May as the seas are the calmest and the visibility the best.

The mantas and whale sharks are the most famous attraction of the Maldives although there is lots more to see. More than 1000 different species of fish and sharks, 20 different types of dolphins and whales, lots of shrimp and nudibranchs, cephalopods…. Everything you like! The corals have been affected by El Nino and got rather bleached in the shallows. The government understood the need for conservation and did and does everything to restore the reefs. Now some studies speak of even more marine life now than before.

The Maldives can have very strong currents. You need to be aware and bring an SMB, gloves and reef hook. The water temperatures are rather constant during the year, going from 26C/79F till 30C/86F. During the northeast monsoon, it can drop to 24C/75F around the south atolls.

You can dive the Maldives from a diving resort, doing day trips to sites close by. To fully enjoy the biodiversity, you should go and dive with a liveaboard. There are very expensive ones but also boats more for the common man. For the dive resorts, it’s the same. I was going to recommend the Conrad Hotel on Rangali -I know some dive instructors there- but then I saw the price. So, unless you are a millionaire, you should better check out some other places…