

A whirlwind romance

Tiny, gorgeous coral islands dotting the Indian Ocean came into our view as we began our descent into the Male airport. The view was indeed surreal. As I stepped foot onto Maldives for the first time, I was excited. After the visa formalities, which were a breeze, I found myself on a speedboat going full throttle over beautiful turquoise waters towards Kani Island on Kaafu Atoll. I was excited as this island was going to be my home for the next four days.

As I walked towards the island from the jetty, I was accompanied by sea cucumbers, clown fishes and other such rich marine life. I felt like I had found 'Nemo' even before I had stepped into the great waters. My feet sunk into soft white sands of the beach while my eyes roved around the fantastic 'palm-tree covered' island and famed lagoon suites. My excitement knew no bounds as I checked into my beach villa with this picture perfect view. I felt at home immediately in the club. The people were extremely friendly and never at one did I feel lost or scared. I also met one of the locals

here who told me that he loves Bollywood movies and wants to visit India sometime soon. I miss the personal connections I made in Maldives. Soon I headed to the beach for a swim. My glazed look of pure surprise continued when baby sharks and young sting rays swam with me in the salty but re-

freshly warm water. Now, I have been to many tropical islands and gorgeous beaches but this was an absolute first for me and a truly novel experience. I enjoyed colourful umbrella drinks as I floated in the sea. Before I realised, I was staring at the sunset that one normally associates with exotic locations. I realised that this was the reason why couples love to go to Maldives for their honeymoon. I am surely running out of adjectives to describe this view. I was also glad to see that Maldives had so many varieties when it came to cuisine. There isn't any dish specific to Maldives. Though it is known for seafood, the cuisine mainly imported from Sri Lanka and other islands. However, I didn't find it hard to manage, being a vegetarian as they had so many eclectic options where I was spoilt for choice.

The next four days in this island paradise was a happy blur. I tried everything - from snorkelling and sailing to kayaking. By the end of it all, I realised that these islands are photogenic inside out. Sometimes, I wonder if the word picture-perfect was invented just to describe such places. Before I knew it, it



ALL SMILES The author

was time to return home. My whirlwind romance with Maldives drew to a close. The picturesque scenes and high-energy places grew onto me by

the end of it all. I moved away from the turquoise warm waters, super-rich and colourful marine life, swaying palms, silver sands, action-packed water adventures, gorgeous sunsets and many umbrella drinks. And I have only

happy memories of the place.

Maldives...I love you! Till we meet again!
Sankara Subramanian C
(For details, visit www.beontheroad.com)



How to get there

■ Took the Air India direct flight from Bangalore to Male. Flight time is 2 hours and 30 minutes and the flight cost me about 16,000 rupees.

■ Indian citizens get free visa on arrival for 90 days provided they have a return flight ticket and proof of hotel booking.

Places to stay

■ I stayed at Club Med Kani on Kaafu Atoll. Club Med is a French hospitality chain that is aimed at the premium and luxury segment. It costs about Rs 66,000 rupees per person on an all-inclusive basis for 3 nights/4 days. This includes stay, all meals and alcoholic beverages, special activities like sailing, snorkelling, kayaking and access to the swimming pool, gym and all the in-house parties and activities

Thanksgiving

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