

ERİYADU

NORTH MALÉ ATOLL MALDIVES

By Sophie Parry

This trip was to relax and unwind having just spent a week on a liveaboard. Eriyadu is reached by high speed boat transfer from Malé airport in about 50-60 minutes.



This small island is situated in the northern part of the atoll. The accommodation and facilities are of a very good standard with 60 bungalows providing the guest accommodation.

The restaurant offers buffet style meals to a very high standard. There is also bar with a good ambience, the like of which we had never experienced on any other island on previous trips to the Maldives.



The diving is provided by Euro Divers who are also registered as a BS-AC resort.

We stayed in a bungalow type room with en-suite bathroom and a shower. The beach was about 20 metres from the room door with sun loungers ready and waiting on the pristine beach.

We enjoyed good weather during our stay in early August with sunshine every day. Water temperature was typically 28-29 degrees C with viz averaging 12-15 metres.

For Non-Divers

This is a small island and other than relax on the beach or swimming in the sea /snorkeling there is not much else to do in the day time. However, the resort does have a good programme of day trips such as fishing trips, sunset cruises, trips to neighbouring islands, snorkeling from a boat and day trips to Malé, the capital city. I would also recommend that snorkelers spend time on the house reef as there is much to see.

The Diving

If you are planning to dive from Eriyadu (or any other island in the Maldives) you should ensure your tour operator negotiates your diving package cost and includes this in your overall quotation for the trip. The cost of diving at the local rate is equal to if not slightly more expensive than hard boat diving on the south coast of the UK. Individual dives are typically USD45 (inc gas & weights) plus a further USD10 if diving from a boat.



Euro Divers

The diving centre is professionally managed by Kai and his team. Euro Divers have recently taken over this centre and have invested heavily in new equipment, which creates a very good first impression to the visiting diver. Nitrox 32 is free to all nitrox certified divers. There are two fresh water dunk tanks- one for kit cleaning and one for camera after-care.

There is a good house reef on Eriyadu so divers who elect to dive on a six days unlimited diving package can take advantage of doing as many dives (including night dives) on the house reef as they can safely manage. We were particularly impressed by the diverse and healthy corals on the house reef.

The dive dhonis depart each morning and afternoon to popular dive sites in the locale. There are two morning/afternoon trips which are billed as novice and advanced dives. This means that visiting divers can decide on the level of diving that best suits their skills and experience.

In addition to the above, there are also day trips back down to Manta Point. Euro Divers also offer PADI & SSI diver training to visitors.

The Top 10 Dive Sites

Finger Point

Time to reach site: 25 minutes

Depth: 13-30 metres

This site is a thila and noted for shark sightings. Expect to see white tip, grey reef, silver tips and if you are lucky even hammer head sharks.

Voshimas Thila

Time to reach site: 60 minutes

Depth: 17-30 metres

This small thila near Reethi Rah is another good site for sharks particularly where there is current. There are also some overhangs to explore and generally good stocks of all the popular reef fish



Huvafen Thila



Time to reach site: 60 minutes

Depth: 22-30 metres

This is a site with big overhangs and prolific hard and soft corals. Also expect to see large shoals of big eye trevallies and when the currents running, the grey, silver tip and maybe even hammer head sharks will be about.

Boduhithi Thila (Manta Point Cleaning Station)

Time to reach site: 70 minutes

Depth: 8-30 metres

This is one of the most popular sites for manta encounters in the Maldives, particularly during the north east monsoon season (December –May). However, it is also possible to see mantas at other times of the year. We spent 45 minutes being entertained by four mantas in late July. As with all dive sites claiming to be manta sites, nothing can be guaranteed regarding manta sightings. Local dive guides suggested the probability of manta sightings for this site is about 50/50.



Madigaa



Time to reach site: 50 minutes

Depth: 10-30 metres

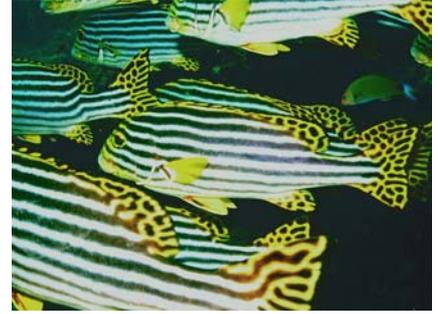
This site is located near Reethi Rah with the top of the reef starting at 8-10 metres and sloping down to 30 metres. There are numerous coral blocks where you will see lobsters, groupers, sweet lips, snappers and moray eels. There is also the possibility of seeing napoleon wrasse and eagle rays. Look to the sandy bottom and you should also spot stingrays and the odd nurse shark

Lucky Rock

Time to reach site: 20 minutes

Depth: 12-30 metres

This is a pinnacle dive with large schools of fusiliers, snappers and red tooth trigger fish. There is a swim-through at 16-23 metres which home to groupers, sweet lips and soldier fish.



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Lucky Hell

Time to reach site: 20 minutes

Depth: 12-30 metres

This is a very interesting and diverse reef formation littered with coral blocks. This site is home to snappers, groupers, lobsters, sweet lips, soldier fish. Also expect to see white tip sharks and napoleon wrasse at this site.

Helengeli Thila

Time to reach site: 70 minutes

Depth: 12-30 metres

This is a renowned dive site and the strong currents mean that you are likely to see sharks, eagle rays and large shoals of jacks. The corals are also very colourful at this site and it's worth taking along your torch to pick out the wonderful hues.



Blue Cave

Time to reach site: 60 minutes

Depth: 10-30 metres

A diverse site that has it all. There are colourful soft corals, massive overhangs, garden eels and all the usual species of reef fish. If there is some current, you will see eagle rays and reef sharks

Shark Sleeping Place

Time to reach site: 25 minutes

Depth: 8-30 metres

This is part of a large reef system and at certain times is swept by a current which can make this dive both demanding and exhilarating. All the big guys live here- sharks, rays, morays and napoleon wrasse. Also have a look around the coral block to the eastern side of this site as there is an abundance of marine life in the sheltered areas. Go south and you will find some large gorgonian fans.



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