

A trip to the 'ridiculously beautiful' Kandima Maldives

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Kandima Maldives looks like it was taken straight out of a postcard (Image: Kandima Maldives)

Frankly, I was concerned that my too-good-to-be-true trip to The Maldives might, actually, be too good to be true.

For starters, I thought I might get bored spending a week on a 3km long island, with the only way off being via a seaplane or a speedboat. Granted, the island in question was ridiculously beautiful, but as someone who likes to keep busy on holiday I feared varied activities could be lacking.

But at Kandima Maldives, I needn't have worried. Want to enjoy the complete seclusion of a swim-up overwater villa? You can do that at Kandima. Fancy sending the kids to run off steam at a dedicated kids club? Consider it done. What about partying until the early hours at a glow party with a top DJ? They've got that too. Scuba diving with turtles? No problem. Massages at a spa? Easily arranged. Enjoying yoga with a private instructor? Sure, why not. And the extensive list of activities is set to get even bigger, with plans in place to add a go-karting track, VR gaming suite and zip line, among others.



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Yet that's not to say that this is some kind of tropical Centre Parcs. For those looking to thoroughly relax, the island remains a blissful escape from the maddening pace of modern civilisation. You can have entire swathes of the idyllic white beach to yourself, easily find a spot to lounge around the pool or a get a prime seat in the beach bar to watch the sunset. Despite having 270 rooms, Kandima never feels busy. Visions of tourists scrapping over sun loungers at dawn couldn't be further from life on this paradise island.

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My partner and I arrived by seaplane, a magical journey spent gawping at the islands dotted along the sea like constellations below. A speedboat meets the plane on arrival, delivering guests, James Bond-style, to the dedicated welcome jetty. We were instantly ushered in with warmth by the waiting staff, who offer this same service to everyone that comes to Kandima. There's no such thing as a check-in (or check-out) time here, where guests are greeted with the same enthusiasm at all hours of night or day.

A shuttle bus is available to take you to your room, but we opted to walk down the beach instead – why not make the most of every minute in paradise? Our room was an iconic Maldivian water villa, built on stilts in the lagoon with a ladder giving direct access to the sea. These villas are among the more expensive accommodation options, but there's no such thing as a bad room on this island. If you opt for a beach villa, you get direct access to the pristine sands, while the sunrise villas on the other side of the island offer access to a more rugged, less busy side of Kandima.



Yet there's nothing quite like the sheer indulgence of a water villa. The bed is positioned in front of floor-to-ceiling sliding doors that look straight on to the sea – snoozing my alarm in the morning was far less tempting with a view like that to wake up to.

We quickly settled into a routine of enjoying activities in the morning (riding complimentary hire bikes around the sandy paths, visiting the gym or browsing the small island shops). This left the afternoon for sunbathing and, most importantly, making use of the two beach bars on the island.

We found Breeze Bar great for people watching (The Maldives sees nearly two million visitors every year, with Russians the most frequent visitors), while the Beach Bar was ideal for watching the sunset. Sitting on perfect white sands, sipping a Diño cocktail as

ideal for watching the sunset, sitting on perfect white sands, sipping a fine cocktail as the sun slipped beyond the horizon was a total pinch-me moment if I've ever had one.

Food options are also plentiful at Kandima, despite being an isolated island. At the two buffet restaurants, Flavour and Zest, you are unlikely to see the same dish served twice, with a truly global menu that will satisfy everyone from foodies to fusspots. Importing ingredients on to the island has not been a barrier to adventurous flavours from the chefs.

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We also tried the three a la carte restaurants, Smoked, Sea Dragon and Azure (specialising in seafood, Asian and Mediterranean food respectively), each feeling genuinely distinctive from the last. After dinner, it was time to hop into the private hot tub on our decking to stare at the stars and hear the hypnotic waves. But while there was plenty of relaxation, the boredom I worried about was entirely unfounded. We spent our time on Kandima going on boat trips, visiting the heavenly spa for massages and getting private art lessons in the dedicated art studio.

The 'Turtle Quest' boat trip leaves from the island's dedicated water sports centre, where you can rent jet skis, paddleboards, canoes and scuba diving equipment. You can also borrow a snorkel and swim straight off the beach to catch some tropical fish, but a boat trip is the best way to see more exciting wildlife. After being dropped off at a nearby coral reef, we swam around in a group aiming to spot turtles. They appeared elusive, and I was ready to give up and head back to the boat when I saw some movement on the reef floor. Like magic, a turtle began a hypnotic swim towards the surface, coming within touching distance of my outstretched arms – a moment I can't fully articulate the emotion of. This, alone, was worth the nearly 10,000km journey to get there.





It is these experiences that truly set the Maldives apart from anywhere else, a series of scarcely believable moments that came in quick succession during my stay. I practically had to drag myself down the jetty to catch the seaplane home and –far from being bored– I could have easily spent another week or two at Kandima.

Too good to be true? No – it was every bit as good, and as true, as I had hoped.

Kandima Maldives are running a special 'Hello Summer' offer on bookings of 4 nights up between 11 May - 30 Sept. This includes a whopping 60% off on all room types and meal plans, with buffet and a-la-carte meals, 15% off on marine excursions and watersports, complimentary daily snorkelling session, a gifted couple massage for honeymooners and a special photoshoot on the house, and free stay allowances for children under six.

A seven-night stay based on two adults sharing a Sky Studio on B&B basis start at £1,520, inclusive of domestic transfers and all taxes. Head to www.kandima.com for bookings

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