Fonadhoo, Laamu Atoll: a complete island guide

Fonadhoo, Laamu Atoll

The capital island of Laamu Atoll, with three villages - Barasil, Medhuavah and Kurigam - plus two newer communities formed by people who moved from Gaadhoo.

ISLAND
Fonadhoo

ATOLL
Laamu Atoll

NEAREST AIRPORT
Kadhdhoo (KDO)

ATOLL CAPITAL
Fonadhoo

CURRENCY
Maldivian Rufiyaa

LANGUAGE
Dhivehi, English widely used

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Your complete guide to Fonadhoo, Laamu Atoll

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1. WELCOME TO FONADHOO

The capital island of Laamu Atoll, with three villages - Barasil, Medhuavah and Kurigam - plus two newer communities formed by people who moved from Gaadhoo.

Most people are civil servants or work at Kadhdhoo Airport or the Maandhoo Fisheries Complex. Some farm on a small scale, others are self-employed. There have been no open-sea fishing boats for a decade, only a few small reef boats and two cargo boats to Malé.

2. ESSENTIAL FACTS

Atoll	Laamu Atoll (L)
Population	2,101 (2014 census); the island council reported over 3,000 in 2023
Size	1.68 km², 4 km long and 480 m wide
Distance from Malé	259 km south of Malé
Atoll capital	Fonadhoo
Nearest airport	Kadhdhoo (KDO)
Language	Dhivehi; English is widely understood where there are guesthouses
Religion	Sunni Islam. This is an inhabited island, so alcohol is not sold and modest dress is expected away from the tourist beach.
Currency	Maldivian Rufiyaa (MVR); US dollars are accepted by most guesthouses
Time zone	UTC+5, no daylight saving

3. GETTING THERE

A causeway almost a kilometre long joins Fonadhoo to Kadhdhoo, which adjoins Maandhoo and Gan - four islands in one 18 km chain you can cycle end to end.

Reaching Laamu Atoll from Malé: no public ferry; fly to Kadhdhoo in about 55 min.

4. HISTORY AND HERITAGE

Most of the island's history is unrecorded. It is considered a Gaamathee Rah, an island formed on a coral mountain with the lagoon on one side and the open sea on the other. Historic sites include the Old Friday Mosque, sheltered tombs and old mosques and cemeteries around the island.

5. HOW THE ISLAND LIVES

Most people are civil servants or work at Kadhdhoo Airport or the Maandhoo Fisheries Complex. Some farm on a small scale, others are self-employed. There have been no open-sea fishing boats for a decade, only a few small reef boats and two cargo boats to Malé.

6. ON THE ISLAND

A government school covering grades 1 to 12, and two preschools.

7. BEFORE YOU GO

The linked islands make Laamu unusually easy to move around without a boat. Check bikini beach arrangements with your guesthouse. No alcohol on the islands.

Inhabited islands follow local rules rather than resort rules. Swimwear belongs on the designated tourist beach only, alcohol is not sold, and shops and offices pause for about fifteen minutes at each of the five daily prayers.

Bring cash in small notes. Card acceptance is patchy outside the larger islands, and not every island has an ATM.

8. WHEN TO VISIT

January to April for diving; surf season runs roughly March to October

9. AROUND THE ATOLL

This island is part of Laamu Atoll. The atoll guide covers every inhabited island and every resort island in it, how the ferries run, and what the atoll is known for.

Everything in this guide is bookable with local Maldivian operators.

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