Kaafu Atoll: islands, resorts and how to get there

Kaafu Atoll

The atoll that holds the capital, the airport and the cheapest boat rides in the country. Almost every Maldives trip starts here.

CAPITAL ISLAND
Malé

ISLANDS IN TOTAL
105

INHABITED ISLANDS
9

RESORT ISLANDS
55

AIRPORT
Velana International (MLE) - the atoll contains the country's main...

CURRENCY
Maldivian Rufiyaa

LANGUAGE
Dhivehi, English widely used

Complete travel guide - 2026 / 2027 Edition

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Your complete guide to Kaafu Atoll

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Magic Maldives

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The division covers North Malé, South Malé, Gaafaru and Kaashidhoo. Malé, Hulhulé, Hulhumalé and Vilimalé sit inside North Malé Atoll but belong to the separate Malé City division.

Kurumba, on Vihamanaafushi, was the first resort island in the Maldives, and the atoll still holds more resorts than any other.

Maafushi is the busiest guesthouse island in the country and the usual first stop for independent travellers.

1. THE ATOLL IN NUMBERS

Capital island	Malé
Islands in total	105
Inhabited islands	9
Resort islands	55
People	19,238
Airport	Velana International (MLE) - the atoll contains the country's main airport
Getting here from Malé	30-90 min by speedboat; public ferry from about 1.5 hrs

Kaafu is where the Maldives is easiest. The international airport sits inside the atoll, the boat rides are short, and the local islands south of Malé hold more guesthouses than anywhere else in the country. If it is your first trip, or a short one, this is the sensible base.

2. GETTING HERE

You are already here when you land. Velana International is on Hulhulé, inside Kaafu. From the airport jetty a public ferry or a speedboat reaches the nearest guesthouse islands in under two hours - often in half of that.

3. WHICH ISLAND TO PICK

Maafushi is the busiest and best equipped, with the widest choice of guesthouses and excursions, and the most other travellers. Thulusdhoo is for surfers. Guraidhoo and Gulhi are quieter and closer to the reefs. Dhiffushi and Gaafaru are further out and feel it.

4. WHAT IT COSTS

Kaafu is the cheapest atoll to reach and among the cheapest to stay in, but it is also the most

commercialised. If you want an island where you are the only visitor, look south to Vaavu or west to Ari.

5. WHERE PEOPLE LIVE

9 inhabited islands in Kaafu Atoll. These are the islands with guesthouses, shops, ferries and a community - not resorts.

- Dhiffushi
- Gaafaru
- Gulhi
- Guraidhoo
- Himmafushi
- Huraa
- Kaashidhoo
- Maafushi
- Thulusdhoo

6. RESORT ISLANDS

Each resort in the Maldives has its own island. These are the resort islands in Kaafu Atoll, with the island name first.

Island	Resort
Lhohifushi	Adaaran Hudhuranfushi
Vaadhoo	Adaaran Prestige Vadoo
Rannaalhi	Adaaran Rannalhi
Dhigufinolhu	Anantara Dhigu
Veliganduhuraa	Anantara Veli
Ihuru	Angsana Ihuru
Asdhoo	Asdu Sun Island
Bodubandos	Bandos
Vabbinfaru	Banyan Tree Vabbinfaru
Baros	Baros Maldives
Biyadhoo	Biyadhoo
Giraavaru	Centara Ras Fushi
Kanuhuraa	Cinnamon Dhonveli
Kanifinolhu	Club Med Kani

Boduhithi	Coco Bodu Hithi
Kudahithi	Coco Prive
Makunufushi	Cocoa Island
Enboodhoo	Embudu Village
Eriyadhoo	Eriyadu
Fihalhohi	Fihalhohi
Kudahuraa	Four Seasons Kuda Huraa
Kodhipparu	Grand Park Kodhipparu
Kandoomaafushi	Holiday Inn Kandooma
Nakachchaafushi	Huvafen Fushi
Bolifushi	Jumeirah Vittaveli
Kagi	Kagi
Kudabandos	Kuda Bandos
Vihamanaafushi	Kurumba
Olhahali	LUX North Male
Makunudhoo	Makunudu
Meerufenfushi	Meeru
Boduhuraa	Naladhu
Helengeli	Oblu Helengeli
Akirifushi	Oblu Sangeli
Olhuveli	Olhuveli
Medhufinolhu	One&Only Reethi Rah
Maadhoo	Ozen Maadhoo
Mahaanaelhihuraa	Rihiveli
Furannafushi	Sheraton Full Moon
Ziyaaraiffushi	Summer Island
Henbadhoo	Taj Coral Reef
Enboodhoofinolhu	Taj Exotica
Thulhaagiri	Thulhagiri
Velassaru	Velassaru
Lankanfinolhu	Villa Nautica

7. WHAT IT IS KNOWN FOR

Maafushi, Thulusdhoo and Guraidhoo - the islands that made independent travel in the Maldives possible. Thulusdhoo's Cokes and Chickens are two of the country's best-known surf breaks.

8. WORTH YOUR TIME

- The shortest and cheapest transfers in the Maldives, 30-90 minutes
- Maafushi, Thulusdhoo, Guraidhoo, Dhiffushi, Himmafushi, Huraa, Gulhi and Gaafaru all take independent guests
- Cokes and Chickens surf breaks off Thulusdhoo
- The densest day-excursion market in the country - sandbanks, dolphins, night fishing
- Malé fish market, worth a morning on its own

9. WHEN TO GO

January to April for the calmest crossings

10. BEFORE YOU GO

These are inhabited Muslim islands. Cover shoulders and knees away from the designated bikini beach, which every tourist island here has. Alcohol is not sold on local islands; some guesthouses run an evening trip to a floating bar. During Ramadan cafés close in daylight hours.

11. COMMON QUESTIONS

How do I get from Malé airport to Maafushi?

Public ferry or speedboat, both leaving from the Malé side. The speedboat takes about 30 minutes and runs several times a day; the ferry is much cheaper and slower, and does not run on Fridays. Search the route and date on this site to see what is actually running.

Is Kaafu Atoll good for a first trip to the Maldives?

It is the usual starting point. Transfers are short and cheap, there is more accommodation than in any other atoll, and the excursion market is the densest in the country.

Can you drink alcohol on the local islands in Kaafu?

No. Alcohol is not sold on inhabited islands anywhere in the Maldives. Some guesthouses arrange an evening trip to a floating bar or a nearby resort.

Everything in this guide is bookable with local Maldivian operators.

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