Maafushi, Kaafu Atoll: a complete island guide

Maafushi, Kaafu Atoll

Everything worth knowing about Maafushi in Kaafu Atoll - how to get there, what is on the island and what to expect.

ISLAND
Maafushi

ATOLL
Kaafu Atoll

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

ATOLL CAPITAL
Malé

CURRENCY
Maldivian Rufiyaa

LANGUAGE
Dhivehi, English widely used

Complete travel guide - 2026 / 2027 Edition

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1. WELCOME TO MAAFUSHI

The busiest local island in the country for visitors. Guesthouse numbers went from 40 in December 2015 to more than 55 by August 2016 and 72 by December 2017 - more guesthouses and guest beds than any other inhabited island in the Maldives. Guests from nearby resorts come over for island hopping and shopping.

Guesthouse tourism, by a long way. Souvenir shops trade in areas the council has set aside for visiting tourists.

2. ESSENTIAL FACTS

Atoll	Kaafu Atoll (K)
Population	4,471 (2022 census, including foreign residents)
Size	1.275 km long and 260 m wide
Distance from Malé	26 km south of Malé
Atoll capital	Malé
Nearest airport	Velana International (MLE) - the atoll contains the country's main airport
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

Reached by public ferry from Malé, and by scheduled and private speedboat. Most visitors arrive via Velana International Airport and transfer from there.

Reaching Kaafu Atoll from Malé: 30-90 min by speedboat; public ferry from about 1.5 hrs.

4. HISTORY AND HERITAGE

The island was heavily damaged by the 2004 tsunami. From August 2006 the IFRC, supported by the Irish and American Red Cross, built a mains sewage system and funded replacement homes for the families who lost theirs.

5. WHAT THERE IS FOR VISITORS

The busiest local island in the country for visitors. Guesthouse numbers went from 40 in December 2015 to more than 55 by August 2016 and 72 by December 2017 - more guesthouses and guest beds than any other inhabited island in the Maldives. Guests from nearby resorts come over for island hopping and shopping.

6. HOW THE ISLAND LIVES

Guesthouse tourism, by a long way. Souvenir shops trade in areas the council has set aside for visiting tourists.

7. ON THE ISLAND

Mains sewage system. Elected island council of five councillors under the Decentralization Act.

8. 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.

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.

9. WHEN TO VISIT

January to April for the calmest crossings

10. AROUND THE ATOLL

This island is part of Kaafu 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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