MAGIC MALDIVES · TRAVEL GUIDE

Baa Atoll

A UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, and home to the largest documented manta ray gathering on earth.

CAPITAL ISLAND **Eydhafushi**	INHABITED ISLANDS **13**
FROM MALé **no direct public ferry; scheduled speedboat 4**	BEST MONTHS **Mantas at Hanifaru from May to November,**
AIRPORT **Dharavandhoo (DRV), 20 min flight from Malé**	

Known for

Hanifaru Bay, where up to 1,500 individual reef mantas have been recorded and 200 can feed in a single tide. Thulhaadhoo keeps Maldivian lacquerwork alive.

About Baa Atoll

Baa is the atoll people come to for one reason, and it is a good one. Between roughly May and November, plankton concentrates in a small bay called Hanifaru and reef mantas arrive to feed in numbers recorded nowhere else on earth.

Getting here

There is no direct public ferry from Malé — the ferry network is regional, and Baa is not in Malé's zone. Two realistic options: a scheduled speedboat four days a week that calls at Dharavandhoo, Kamadhoo and Kudarikilu, or a 20-minute flight to Dharavandhoo followed by a short boat.

Hanifaru Bay, and its rules

The bay is a protected core area. Snorkelling only — no scuba. You must go with a licensed guide, numbers in the water are capped and rotated, and boats wait outside. Going in July, August or September gives the best chance. This is the one place in the Maldives where the standard "come in the dry season" advice is actively wrong.

Where to stay

Dharavandhoo is the practical base — the airport is there and Hanifaru is three kilometres away. Fulhadhoo, Fehendhoo and Goidhoo sit on a separate sub-atoll to the south, are beautiful and very quiet, but are on the wrong rim for easy manta trips.

Highlights

- Hanifaru Bay — the world's largest documented reef manta aggregation
- UNESCO Biosphere Reserve status across the whole atoll since 2011
- Dharavandhoo — airport, guesthouses and 3 km from Hanifaru
- Fulhadhoo, Fehendhoo and Goidhoo — quiet, beach-led and barely visited

- Thulhaadhoo lacquerwork, one of the last places the craft is still turned

Getting there and getting around

Speedboat from Malé

From Malé: no direct public ferry; scheduled speedboat 4 days a week, or fly to Dharavandhoo in 20 min

On a local island

Dharavandhoo and the Goidhoo islands have bikini beaches. No alcohol on the islands. Hanifaru Bay is a protected area — you may snorkel only, with a licensed guide, in timed groups. No diving and no fins-first entries.

Common questions

When is manta season at Hanifaru Bay?

Roughly May to November, with the peak from July to September. This is the wet season — the plankton the mantas feed on comes with the monsoon, so the best manta months are not the best weather months.

Can you dive at Hanifaru Bay?

No. Hanifaru is a protected core area where only snorkelling is allowed, with a licensed guide, in timed and capped groups.

Is there a ferry from Malé to Baa Atoll?

Not directly. The public ferry network is regional and Baa is not in Malé's zone. There is a scheduled speedboat four days a week, or a 20-minute flight to Dharavandhoo.