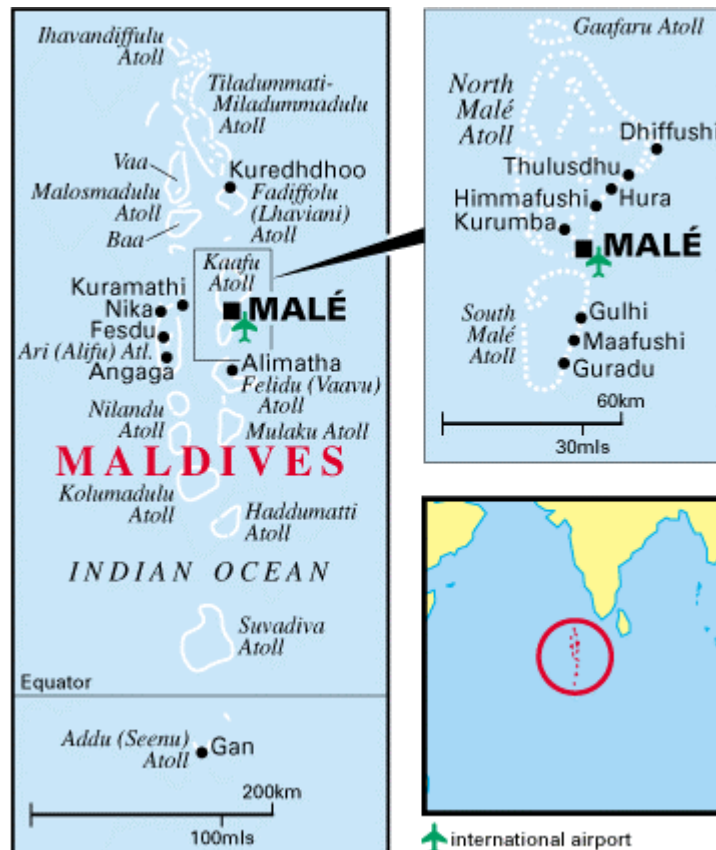


the Maldives republic

Travel Guide



The following general outline offers practical information, suggestions, and answers to some frequently asked questions. It is not intended to be the definitive guide for your trip.

Gan, Maldives												
Elevation: 6 feet			Latitude: 00 41S				Longitude: 073 09E					
Average Temperature												
°F	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
	81	82	82	83	83	82	82	81	81	81	81	80
Average Precipitation												
in.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
	11.5	2.3	12.8	3.9	6.5	10.9	4.8	6.5	8.4	13	8.4	6.8

GENERAL INFORMATION

Area: 298 sq km (115 sq miles).

Population: 270,101 (2000).

Population Density: 906.4 per sq km.

Capital: Malé. **Population:** 74,069 (2000).

Geography: The Maldives Republic is located 500km (300 miles) southwest of the southern tip of India and consists of about 1190 low-lying coral islands, of which only 200 are inhabited. Most of the inhabited islands are covered by lush tropical vegetation and palm trees, while the numerous uninhabited islands, some of which are mere sand spits or coral tips, are covered in shrubs. Each island is surrounded by a reef enclosing a shallow lagoon. Hundreds of these islands together with other coral growth form an atoll, surrounding a lagoon. All the islands are low-lying, none more than 2m (7ft) above sea level. The majority of the indigenous population does not mix with the tourist visitors, with the exception of those involved with tourism in the resorts and Malé.

Government: Republic since 1965. Gained independence from the UK in 1965. Head of State and Government: President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom since 1978.

Language: The national language is Dhivehi. English is widely used as a business language in government offices and the commercial sector. Other languages are widely used within tourist areas.

Religion: The indigenous population is almost entirely Sunni Muslim.

Time: GMT + 5.

Electricity: 220 volts AC, 50Hz. Round-pin plugs are used, although square-pin plugs are now becoming more common.

Telephone: IDD is available. Country code: 960. Outgoing international code: 00.

Mobile telephone: GSM 900 network operated by Dhiraagu, the Maldives Telecommunications Company. Handsets can be hired by the day.

Fax: Services are available in Malé and the resorts.

Internet: The Internet can be accessed from most areas of the Maldives. Malé, the capital, has an Internet cafe and almost all resorts facilitate the sending and receiving of e-mails.

Telegram: Telecommunications in the Maldives are good – telegram services are available to and from anywhere in the world from Dhiraagu in Malé and the resorts.

Post: Airmail to Western Europe takes about a week. Post office hours: Sat-Thurs 0730-1330 and 1600-1750.

PASSPORT / VISA

Passports: For international travel, a U.S. passport valid for at least six months from date of departure, containing **at least** two blank pages is necessary.

Visas: U.S. and Canadian citizens do not require visas in advance. Citizens from other countries, consult the nearest Maldives consulate.

Important: Please look at your passport prior to travel to insure that:

- 1) Your passport is valid for at least six months after the date of travel.
- 2) You have sufficient blank pages for visa stamps that will be added as you travel in and out of various countries.

Please note: Pages reserved for amendments and endorsements cannot be used for visas.

MONEY

Currency: Maldivian Rufiya (Rf) = 100 laari. Notes are in denominations of Rf500, 100, 50, 20, 10 and 5. Coins are in denominations of Rf2 and 1, and 50, 25, 10, 5, 2 and 1 laari.

Currency exchange: Major currencies can be exchanged at banks, tourist resort islands, hotels and leading shops. Payments in hotels can be made in most hard currencies (particularly US Dollars) in cash, travelers checks or credit cards. **Banking hours:** Sun-Thurs 0800-1330.

Credit & debit cards: Most major island resorts will accept American Express, Visa, MasterCard, Eurocard and Diners Club. Arrangements vary from island to island, and it is advisable to check with your credit or debit card company for details of merchant acceptability and other facilities which may be available.

Travelers checks: These are generally accepted in Sterling and US Dollars. To avoid additional exchange rate charges, travelers are advised to take travelers checks in US Dollars.

Currency restrictions: There are no restrictions on import or export of either local or foreign currencies.

DUTY FREE

The following goods may be imported without incurring customs duty: A reasonable amount of cigarettes, cigars and tobacco; a reasonable number of gifts.

Prohibited items: Pornographic literature; idols of worship; pork products and certain other animal products; explosives, weapons or drugs may not be imported. Alcoholic beverages cannot be imported without an official licence. Drugs are strictly prohibited; the penalty for importing drugs for personal or other use is life imprisonment. Animals require a veterinary certificate, but dogs cannot be imported.

The following may not be exported in any form: tortoise and turtle shells and products made of turtle shell (the Government has banned the killing of turtles), and black coral in whole form.

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

Jan 1 New Year's Day.
Feb 1 Hajj Day.
Feb 2 Eidal Alha (Feast of the Sacrifice).
Feb 22 Islamic New Year.
Apr 21 National Day.
May 2 Mouloud (Birth of the Prophet).
Jul 20 Huravee Day.
Jul 26-27 Independence Day.
Sep 16 Martyrs' Day.
Oct 15 Start of Ramadan.
Nov 3 Victory Day.
Nov 11-12 Republic Day.
Nov 14-16 Kuda Eid (End of Ramadan).

Note: Muslim festivals are timed according to local sightings of various phases of the moon and the dates given above are approximations. During the lunar month of Ramadan that precedes Eid al-Fitr, Muslims fast during the day and feast at night and normal business patterns may be interrupted. Many restaurants are closed during the day and there may be restrictions on drinking in public places. Some disruption may continue into Eid al-Fitr itself, although this is generally unlikely to affect life on the resort islands. Eid al-Fitr and Eid el-Kebir may last anything from 2 to 10 days, depending on the region.

HEALTH

Special Precautions & Required Certificates: A yellow fever vaccination certificate is required from travellers arriving within 6 days from infected areas. Following WHO guidelines issued in 1973, a cholera vaccination certificate is not a condition of entry to the Maldives. Malaria is disappearing. The risk of infection is very low.

Food & drink: The water provided in the resort areas is generally safe to drink. In other areas, water of uncertain origin used for drinking, brushing teeth or making ice should have first been boiled or otherwise sterilised. Food in hotels and resorts is usually risk free, although visitors should be cautious elsewhere.

Other risks: Typhoid may occur. Hepatitis A, B, and E can occur. Tuberculosis and diphtheria vaccines are sometimes advised. Dengue fever occurs. Rabies may be present although there have been no reported incidences in animals or humans since 1996. For those at high risk, vaccination before arrival should be considered. If you are bitten, seek medical advice without delay.

Health care: There are two hospitals on Malé, the Indhira Gandhi Memorial hospital and the ADK private hospital. First-

aid facilities are available on all resort islands. A decompression chamber is accessible from most resorts in case of diving emergencies. Health insurance is strongly recommended.

TRAVEL - INTERNATIONAL

AIR: The national airline is Island Aviation Services (Q2). There are direct flights from Colombo, Trivandrum, Dubai, Karachi, Singapore, Frankfurt, Munich, Dusseldorf, Zurich, Bucharest, Bombay, Italy, Rome, London, Narita, Doha, Vienna, Madrid, Moscow, Sharjah, Kuala Lumpur, Bahrain, Gatwick, Manchester and Paris. Other airlines running services to Malé include Austrian Airlines, Malaysia Airlines and Singapore Airlines, which operates daily flights into Malé from Singapore.

Approximate flight times: From Malé to London is 13 hours (excluding stopover).

Departure tax: None.

TRAVEL - INTERNAL

Sea: Visitors generally remain on their resort island for the duration of their stay, although island-hopping trips by ferries are widely available. Local charter boats are also easily available for hire. High-speed boats meet arrivals at the airport, supplied by the resort they are booked with, and boats are available for hire at the ferry counter near the jetty area. The speedboats connect the airport with Ari Atoll and some outlying islands. The indigenous inhabitants, however, live a parochial life and tend to visit only Malé, and even then irregularly.

Road: Travel on individual islands does not present any problem since few of them take longer than half an hour to cross on foot. In Malé, it is possible to take taxis.

SOCIAL PROFILE

Food & Drink: Malé, the capital, has a few simple restaurants which serve local and international food. On the other islands, there are a few restaurants in addition to those run by the resorts. Cuisine is international, with all foodstuffs other than seafood imported. The fish is magnificent. Curries and oriental buffets are widely available.

There is a good range of alcoholic and non-alcoholic drink available at the resorts, reflecting the demands of the visitors. There are a few local cocktails, including The Maldiva Lady, a powerful and delicious concoction, whose composition varies from bar to bar and island to island.

Note: All bars are situated in tourist resorts (no alcohol is available on Malé). All accept cash, but normally add orders onto the total bill. Locals do not drink at all. During the month of Ramadan (see Public Holidays), visitors are not allowed to drink alcohol in public except in the tourist resorts.

Nightlife: There is little or no organised nightlife, although most resorts have informal discos around the bar areas, sometimes featuring live bands playing either traditional or Western music. Beach parties and barbecues are also popular. On some evenings, many resorts have cultural shows and some show videos.

Shopping: Local purchases include sea shells (only when bought in official shops; they may not be removed from the beach or from the sea), lacquered wooden boxes and reed mats. Jewellery to purchase includes gold, silver, coral,

mother-of-pearl and turtle-shell items. However, there are strict prohibitions against the export of coral and turtle-shell.

Shopping hours: Sat-Thurs 0830-2300, Fri 1330-2300. Shops officially shut for 15 minutes five times a day in deference to Muslim prayer times; however, this rule is not always strictly adhered to in the tourist areas away from the capital.

Special Events: The following is a list of events taking place in 2004: Jan 1 New Year Celebrations. Feb 2 Eidal Adha (Feast of the Sacrifice). Jul 26-27 Independence Day Theme Floats (celebrations with themed floats). Sep 27 Tourism Day. Oct Culinary Exhibition. Nov 14-16 Kuda Eid (End of Ramadan).

Social Conventions: Dress is informal, but locals who are Muslim will be offended by nudity or scanty clothing in public places, and the Government rigidly enforces these standards. Bikinis and other scanty beachwear are not acceptable in Malé or on any other inhabited island. When entering a mosque, the legs and the body, but not the neck and the face, should be covered. Handshaking is the most common form of greeting. The indigenous population not involved in the tourist trade lives in isolated island communities maintaining almost total privacy. A large number of locals smoke, but smoking and eating during Ramadan is discouraged.

Tippling: This is officially discouraged.

BUSINESS PROFILE

Economy: Small quantities of cereals, fruit and vegetables are grown on the little fertile land available on the islands. Fishing is far more important: tuna fishing accounts for half of the Maldives' export earnings. The industrial sector has grown substantially since 1980 as a result of major infrastructure investment in desalination plants, refurbished accommodation, generators and air conditioning. Much of this was originally designed for use by the tourism industry, which has also grown rapidly following the decline of shipping, and now accounts for almost one quarter of GDP. Otherwise, there is some light industrial activity, including fish-canning, textiles and boat building, and a small financial services sector which has recently come under scrutiny (along with several dozen other small economies offering 'offshore' services). In general, the islands' economic development has been constrained by their relative isolation and the small size of the domestic market. Hopes that the Maldives might become an oil producer were dashed when a ten-year exploration programme failed to locate deposits in the islands' territorial waters. The Maldives is a member of the Asian Development Bank and the Colombo Plan.

Business Office hours: Sun-Thurs 0730-1430. Friday and Saturday are official rest days.

CLIMATE

The Maldives have a hot tropical climate. There are two monsoons, the southwest from May to October and the northeast from November to April. Generally the southwest brings more wind and rain in June and July. The temperature rarely falls below 25°C (77°F). The best time to visit is November to Easter.

Required clothing: Lightweight cottons and linens throughout the year. Light waterproofs are advised during the rainy season.

HISTORY AND GOVERNMENT

The Dhivehin, as the islanders are called, are a mixed people of Aryan, Negroid, Sinhalese, Dravidian and Arab descent. The islands were under Muslim control from the 12th century, and then Portuguese rule from 1518 before becoming a dependency of Ceylon (Sri Lanka) in 1645. They became a British Protectorate, with an elected Sultan as head of state, in 1887. The islands became a republic, briefly, in 1953-4 and achieved full independence as a sultanate in 1965. Three years later, the Republic of the Maldives was re-established and Ibrahim Nasir, Prime Minister since 1954, became President. In 1978, President Nasir decided against a third term as President, and was succeeded by Maumoon Abdul Gayoom. Gayoom – the dominant figure in the islands' politics since then – established a 'Citizens' Special Majlis' (legislature) which began work in 1980 with a brief to revise the constitution. After 17 years of work, the new model constitution was ratified by President Gayoom and came into effect in January 1998. In 1985, the Maldives was a founder member of the South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC) and hosted regional summits in 1990 and 1997.

Islam is a central feature of the country's life and is now supervised by a Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, working under direct presidential control. With no formal political parties, the Maldives' politics are personality based; no credible threat to Gayoom has emerged in the 25 years during which he has held power not least because dissent is firmly repressed by Gayoom's security forces. The only overt sign of discontent in recent years came in September 2003 when the death of several prisoners sparked riots in the capital. Nonetheless, after the riots were quelled, Gayoom – underpinned by his reputation for good economic management – went on to secure a record sixth term of office at the presidential poll in November 2003.

The government's other major concern is global warming. The Maldives are among those small low-lying islands – 80 per cent of the territory is less than 1m above sea level – whose very existence is threatened. American rejection of the Kyoto protocol on greenhouse gas emissions caused some bitterness.

Government: Under the revised constitution which came into effect in 1998, the legislature, or Majlis, has 48 members. Of these, 40 are directly elected for a five-year term in multi-seat constituencies, and the remaining eight are presidential appointees. The president holds executive power assisted by an appointed ministerial cabinet. Outside the capital, however, considerable power is exercised by the atoll chiefs (Atholhu Verins), who are appointed by the president.

INTRODUCTION

For a long time, the Republic of Maldives was one of the best-kept secrets in the world; a beautiful string of low-lying coral islands in the Indian Ocean, a paradise for scuba divers, watersports enthusiasts and sunseekers alike. All of these attractions are still very much in evidence, but in recent years the tourism potential of the country has been developed in the form of a large number of island resorts. Several tour operators have added the Maldives to their programmes, and since the introduction of direct flights from Europe, the islands have become an increasingly popular long-haul destination.

The Maldives consist of 26 natural atolls, approximately 1190 islands in all, most of them uninhabited. Most of the resorts are to be found in Malé (Kaafu) Atoll. A few are found in Vaavu, Baa, and Lhaviyani. Alifu (Ari) Atoll

has been declared the new Tourism Zone of the Maldives and work to upgrade and build new resorts is progressing in this area. All resorts offer night-fishing trips, superb snorkelling and windsurfing, and most have facilities for scuba diving, catamaran sailing, para-sailing, banana-boating, water-skiing and volleyball. Some offer other sporting facilities, including badminton and tennis.

OTHER ATOLLS

Most of the other resorts are to be found in the North and South Malé Atolls, but there are also several others, most in the northern island groups.

Alifu (Ari) Atoll: Resorts in the Alifu (Ari) Atoll, which is to the west of Malé with 26 resorts, include Kuramathi, a relatively large island which has first-class facilities and offers an excellent beach, superb diving, windsurfing, water-skiing, parasailing and night fishing and has three resorts. Aribeach is a 121 room resort offering standard and superior accommodation and a superb range of scuba diving and watersport facilities. Nika Island is a small, away-from-it-all, upmarket, 25-room resort offering clients some of the most comfortable boats in the Maldives. Fesdu is situated in the heart of the atoll rather than on the periphery. Accommodation consists of 50 thatched round-houses, all of which are close to the beach. Angaga, also in Ari Atoll, is small and impressively constructed in traditional Maldivian style.

Baa Atoll: The Baa Atoll is about 130km (80 miles) northwest of the capital, one of the few places where traditional arts and crafts are still practiced, and now home to five resorts. The atoll's coral reefs are in pristine condition and are famous for the large number of mantas and reef sharks visiting during the southwest monsoon (May to July). The resorts of Reethi Beach and Coco Palm are both 5-star, each divided into three categories of luxurious villas. There are five restaurants, a fully equipped gym and even squash and tennis courts. Unlike other islands, Baa has its own in-house doctor. Transfer is a 30-minute journey by sea plane or helicopter from the airport. The Soneva Fushi resort, situated on Kunfunadhoo Island, has villas all scattered along the beach front on both sides of the island. It is situated 121km (75 miles) north of Malé airport (travel time – 25-30 minutes.) Soneva Fushi has two main restaurants, both offering interior and exterior dining with local and international cuisine. The atoll's three other resorts are Coco Palm Resort, Royal Island, and Le Meridien (Kihaadhuffaru), all of which have facilities for a wide range of watersports, a health spa and a professional dive school.

Elsewhere: To the north of the North Kaafu Atoll is Lhaviyani Atoll with the fairly simple bungalow Kuredhdhoo resort, essentially a spot for the besotted diver. Immediately south of the South Kaafu Atoll is the Vaavu Atoll, with some of the best diving in the entire archipelago. A well established, long-popular resort, especially among visiting Italians, is the 70-bungalow Alimatha.

Most tourism is in the northern atolls, but Seenu, the southernmost atoll of the archipelago (situated south of the equator), is known to many as the site of a former RAF staging post in Gan. It provides tourist accommodation at the Ocean Reef Club. There is a regular, heavily booked domestic flight between Malé and Gan.

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LUGGAGE

Traveling light is always the first and best rule! We recommend passengers limit their luggage to one medium-sized soft bag per person or two small duffel bags. In this security conscious era, airline luggage restrictions may change without notice. Also, luggage limits vary depending on ticket class, plane size, destinations, etc. It is always best to confirm with airlines for specific limitations.

Generally speaking, from the US, economy class passengers are allowed to check in two (2) normal size pieces of luggage (each piece measuring no more than about 62 linear inches, which means length plus width plus height), and not exceeding 70 pounds per bag.

Scheduled flights from other countries and within foreign countries generally limit luggage to 44 pounds total, plus one carry-on personal item. Further restrictions apply for charter flights. We will advise you of those restrictions in your final documents.

Most airlines now allow only one carry-on bag in addition to one personal item such as a laptop or handbag. Most bags within the 22 x 14 x 9 (or, a total of 45 linear inches) size restriction will be considered legal carry-on size by major domestic U.S. airlines. Many US airlines check-in desks have sizing boxes within which your bag must fit. Obviously, no knives or cutting instruments are allowed in carry-on baggage.

All luggage should have identification inside as well as secure baggage tags on the outside.

Please note that the US National Transportation and Safety Board now suggests that you do not lock your checked luggage. If a screener has to open your bag, the locks may have to be broken. This applies to flights within the US and international flights originating in the US. This, however, does not address other international travel issues. We suggest that you lock your luggage and bring a couple of spare locks in the event one or more are cut off. But the choice is up to each individual traveler to make.

Hint: Some companies such as Aurora Luggage (<http://www.auroraluggage.com/>) post the most current luggage requirements for many individual airlines on their web sites.

CAMERAS & FILM

Photography: Please, approach people with an attitude of respect, just as you would want to be treated. Do not take anyone's picture without permission. Many times it is necessary to negotiate a fee beforehand. Never take any photos of airports, police or government buildings, military installations, or borders.

Equipment: Bring cameras and lenses you are comfortable using. If you get new equipment before you go, do so as far in advance as possible. Shoot and develop at least a dozen rolls before departure to work out problems. And, don't forget your camera operation manual, filters, and a flash unit. Cameras should be packed with good cushioning. The roads are sometimes rough, and constant vibration can do damage. Keep your camera with you as much as possible, and do not leave it on the floor of the vehicle when on the road. Make sure you have lens caps for all your lenses. Clean your equipment frequently. Bring along a puffer brush and lens cleaning tissues.

Lenses: A combination of fixed and/or zoom lenses with focal lengths from 28 mm to 200 mm is good for general travel

photography, although you can take excellent photographs with only a 50 mm lens. Zoom lenses such as 35-80mm, 70-210 mm, or 100-300 mm will help you capture the sights in a variety of different settings. Serious photographers will want them handy. A macro lens is helpful for shooting close-ups, but a good set of extension tubes will work very well. A 2x converter is also a handy. Point and shoot cameras are nice for a group or indoor shots, but leave something to be desired when photographing outdoors. Bring a small cleaning kit and blower brush to keep equipment clean.

Video: If you are planning to shoot video on a safari, be sure to bring plenty of tape and batteries with you. Do not plan to buy videotape. Videotape is not affected by airport x-ray; only magnetic fields or prolonged exposure to heat will damage videotape. Your battery charger should be capable of automatically adjusting to 240 volts. You will probably have no problem finding a plug in most of the lodges and larger tented camps, but be prepared with plenty of batteries

Batteries: Put fresh photo-quality batteries in your camera and other electric equipment before you leave and bring at least two sets of spare batteries with you. Your camera will be useless without them, and batteries can be hard to find and expensive.

Film: It is always best to bring along whatever you need with you. Film is generally more expensive abroad and it may be hard to locate. You'll be surprised at how much film you use when you are trying to capture all those special moments. Even those not all that interested in photography will probably shoot a couple of 36-exposure rolls per day, and enthusiastic shooters will easily double or triple that amount. Be sure film is fresh and, when possible, keep it refrigerated. A film speed of ASA/ISO 64 is an excellent choice for color slide film. Use this speed when possible rather than higher speed films. There is a noticeable difference in quality that it is worth the extra effort to keep your camera steady at a somewhat slower shutter speed than you would otherwise use. For color prints, there are several good choices, including Kodak and Fuji films (ASA/ISO 100 & 200) for daylight photography, ASA/ISO 400 & 1000 are good for lower light and nighttime situations.

It is helpful to set up a numbering system for your film, marking each roll with masking tape and numbers or letters, before leaving home. This way you can code the rolls of film and where they were shot. It's quite a job to sort through hundreds of pictures with no clue where or when they were taken.

Avoid airport x-ray machines whenever possible and request a hand search of your film only. While security people are often obliging, some are not so allow a little extra time. X-rays are cumulative on exposed and unexposed film so the more times film is x-rayed, the more risk of damage. This is especially true with older machines found in many countries. Lead bags for film are available for purchase and are worth the small investment. Do not have film in your camera because it may be opened for inspection.

NOTE: Recent news reports warn that new explosive detectors used in more than 100 US airports to scan checked baggage will ruin unprotected, unexposed film. This technology will eventually be in place at all airports worldwide. Experts suggest either carrying your film in your carry-on luggage and/or placing film in safety, lead-lined bags to prevent X-ray damage.

SAFETY

Common sense safety precautions you normally observe when traveling anywhere should be followed to minimize the risk of personal injury or property loss.

Leave jewelry at home! Do not leave cash, traveler's checks, airline tickets, etc. in an unattended room, even in a locked suitcase. Most of the accommodations have safe deposit facilities at the front desk for your valuables. Use them.

In cities here as in cities at home, be aware! During the day and in crowds, be careful when carrying purses or cameras. Do not carry large amounts of currency or valuables. Take taxis from hotels and do not accept rides from unauthorized cabs. Do not walk around unfamiliar cities alone at night. Be wary of entering into conversation with unknown people on the street. These are the same precautions a visitor would observe in North American cities. Common sense is the best defense.

Pamphlets addressing safety issues abroad are available from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402, or from Bureau of Consular Affairs' website at <http://travel.state.gov>.

TRAVELER'S ETIQUETTE

You are guaranteed to come up against cultural differences between our society and that of other countries that may think and do things differently from the way we do them. Traditions and philosophies, some of which are very old, govern attitudes toward time, business, family, and politics. But this is at the heart of why we travel -- to experience the world through other cultures and other people.

Travel necessitates being a good-natured realist as well as a romantic. Being a genial traveling companion makes for an enjoyable travel experience for everyone and a great safari. Observing simple rules of common courtesy will better assure the success of your travel.

DEALING WITH JET LAG

With the joys and adventures of international travel come certain unavoidable inconveniences such as occasional lost luggage or bouts of jet lag. In fact, studies reveal that as much as 90% of long distance travelers experience a degree of jet lag.

Jet lag describes that out-of-sorts feeling associated with long flights, particularly those across time zones. Symptoms and severity vary but may include drowsiness, fatigue, irritability, difficulty concentrating, headaches, insomnia, and swelling of the extremities.

The number of time zones crossed affects the severity of jet lag. The internal body clock follows circadian rhythm, which is controlled by the hypothalamus that processes nerve signals. That clock is designed for regular cycles of light and darkness. Depending on the number of time zones crossed, it may take several days for that rhythm to be restored.

But that is not the only influence. Other factors include cabin pressure, stale air, lack of humidity, and your overall physical condition at the beginning of your trip.

Although jet lag can not be completely avoided, there are some simple things you can do to help minimize its affects.

Consider the following for your next scheduled trip.

- Start your trip well rested with a good night's sleep prior to departure. Getting adequate rest before starting on your journey will help minimize the amount of catching up you'll have to do when you arrive at the destination. Once home, try to schedule a day of rest before returning to work.
- Drink plenty of fluids -- water and juices will help you to stay well hydrated. Seasoned travelers recommend that you carry a bottle of drinking water with you and drink eight ounces every hour.
- Avoid alcohol and caffeine just before and during flights. Both possess diuretic properties that promote dehydration. Alcohol also causes drowsiness and contributes to feeling sluggish.
- Once settled onboard, reset your watch to the time zone to which you are traveling. This small act helps you begin adjusting to your destination's local time.
- As much as possible, create a dark environment during flight. Studies have shown that bright lights strongly affect individuals' body clocks. If necessary, try eyeshades and earplugs to help block distractions and convince your body that it is nighttime. Closing window shades and turning off overhead lights may also help. Sleep on the plane if your flight has an early morning arrival time.
- Wear loose-fitting clothing and comfortable shoes that will help in the event you experience mild swelling. Experienced travelers often bring lightweight slippers to wear during flights.
- Although not always feasible, look for opportunities to walk around while in flight. Do simple isometric exercises (contracting and relaxing as many muscle groups as possible) in your seat. These will improve circulation, help promote increased alertness, and reduce chances of swelling.
- If you arrive in the morning, plan to stay awake. If possible, wait until the local bedtime to sleep. Many people swear that this is key in determining how quickly they adapt to local conditions. You will sleep better and will be less likely to suffer insomnia than if you nap upon arrival.
- During extended stopovers, showers are sometimes available. If you have the opportunity, shower. Trans-Pacific pilots report that taking a shower in Hawaii helps them recover more quickly from the general effects of jet lag after the flight.

SELECTED READING LIST

In addition to the many comprehensive and readily available guides produced by Lonely Planet, Fodor, Insight, The Rough Guide, and others, here are a few other titles that might interest you.
These books may be obtained through most bookstores or on the World Wide Web.

MALDIVES: KINGDOM OF A THOUSAND ISLES, FIRST EDITION (Odyssey Illustrated Guide)

by Andrew Forbes

An idyllic marine retreat brought to life through sumptuous color photography and crisp, knowledgeable text. Sometimes known as "The Paradise Isles," the Maldives are made up of hundreds of idyllic islands that are famed for their tropical beaches, coral reefs and marine life. To these can be added some of the best island-style hotels in the world. This guide has a superb introduction and covers local geography, history and culture, with special sections on art, food and marine life. There is a comprehensive survey of the luxurious resorts available, and advice on diving and how to organize a boat cruise. It is an excellent book for anyone preparing to visit the Maldives, will make a great companion during the trip, and provide a treasured keepsake after the event.

MALDIVES

by Michael Friedel

With his incomparable photographs of the Maldivian Islands, Michael Friedel, one of Germany's leading photojournalists, has made the breathtaking beauty of these jewels of the Indian Ocean famous throughout the world. His aerial views of the Maldives have given a new perspective of their home to the islanders themselves. On the 10th anniversary of the Maldivian independence his pictures were used in a series of postage stamps. For over twenty years Michael Friedel has been taking photographs of these tropical atolls on land, under water and from the air. This volume contains a selection of his finest work.

THE MALDIVIAN MYSTERY

by Thor Heyerdahl

When the Maldivian Islanders converted to Islam in the 12th century, they discarded or destroyed all traces of earlier cultures, thus denying their past. Recent archeological discoveries prompted the government to invite Heyerdahl to examine the artifacts and attempt a reconstruction of pre-Islamic history. Located in the Indian Ocean southwest of India and west of Sri Lanka, the Maldives encompass two broad, reefless sea passages ("One-and-Half" and Equatorial Channels) well-known to ancient mariners. Heyerdahl, an authority on primitive sea travel (Kon-Tiki, The Ra Expeditions, unravels a mystery that reaches into the vanished civilizations of Sumer and the Indus Valley. The Maldivian artifacts showed that temples were built around A.D. 550; that the original settlers had been sun-worshippers. An important export of the Maldives in ancient times was cowrie shells, found only in the Islands and used as money. These shells were unearthed in pre-Viking tombs (A.D. 550-800) in Sweden! This is heady material for cultural diffusionists.

Notes: