

# MALDIVES

21-28  
March 2020  
(7 nights)

from  
**1,980 USD\***  
per person

## • GIANTS OF FUVAHMULAH •

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### THE EXPEDITION

The Maldives is known for its teeming and diverse marine life, its pristine white sandy beaches, and its large population of reef manta rays. However, what was not known until very recently was that [oceanic manta rays](#) also frequent Maldivian waters. These giants can be predictably seen only at a specific site, and only at a very specific time of the year, around the tiny sub-equatorial atoll of Fuvahmulah.

This expedition will take you to the remote [Fuvahmulah Atoll](#) at the best time to experience unforgettable encounters with these oceanic rays, while also making you part of our efforts to understand these giants. Very little is known about these rays, although our research suggest it is likely to be [one of the largest populations of oceanic manta rays in the world](#). The aim of this trip is to undertake as many

dives as possible with these giants to help the [Manta Trust](#) experts unravel the mysteries of their lives using photo-ID, video measurements, and behavioural observations.

Fuvahmulah, however, is not just about oceanic manta rays. This remote atoll is also a [magnet for other large pelagic marine life](#). Therefore, while diving for mantas you can also expect to see giant 8-10 metre whale sharks, thresher sharks, grey reef sharks, hammerhead sharks, schooling silvertips, and, with some luck, even a giant ocean sunfish! It is certainly not a stretch to label this small remote atoll the “[Galapagos of the Maldives](#)”. Diving at Fuvahmulah has also recently become well known for encounters with [tiger sharks](#), therefore we will undertake a couple of dives specifically to enjoy close-up encounters with these elegant giants during the expedition. Indeed, seeing 5-6 tiger sharks at once, swimming only a few metres away, is an experience not to be missed!

Fuvahmulah also offers interesting [land experiences](#); such as a visit to the remains of an ancient temple, a walk along one of the two fresh water lakes of the 4.5 km long island, or a visit to the local fish, fruit, and vegetable markets.

Although we can never guarantee these natural events, we have put together a trip which maximises our chances of being in the right place at the right time; guided by the expertise of the Manta Trust's [Simon Hilbourne](#).



## MALDIVES

### TRIP LEADER

### SIMON HILBOURNE



The underwater world has always fascinated Simon from a young age.

His passion for the ocean stems from watching his parents scuba dive in Sri Lanka whilst he floated above on his body board. Simon took up scuba diving and carried that passion through to work as a scuba instructor for a time in Australia, Cyprus and Honduras.

Enrolling at the University of Southampton in the UK, Simon studied marine biology. His Masters dissertation focused on whale shark seasonality in Mexico. Upon graduating, Simon continued to work with whale sharks, this time in the Philippines, before swapping over to study manta rays in the Maldives with the Manta Trust.

Simon is an avid underwater photographer and loves to convey the beauty of the natural world and the conservation issues it faces through his photography.

Simon joined the Maldivian Manta Ray Project back in 2016 as a volunteer, before taking on the full-time role of research and administration officer in Baa Atoll later that year.

In 2019, developing his fascination for the oceanic mantas of the country, Simon began a research project focused at understanding more about the local oceanic manta populations. In parallel Simon has also taken over the role of Media & Communications manager for the Manta Trust.



### CITIZEN SCIENCE - GET INVOLVED!

On this expedition, you'll have the opportunity to experience and participate in **cutting-edge conservation** research to protect one of the ocean's most majestic animals. Manta Trust scientists will be collecting photographic identification images of all mantas encountered throughout the expedition - a task that guests are welcome and encouraged to participate in. All new manta rays will be added to the database, and guests will be invited to name these new animals.

### THE MANTA TRUST

A UK registered charity, the Trust's mission is to advance the worldwide conservation of manta rays and their habitat through robust science and research, by raising awareness and providing education, influence and action. The Manta Trust was formed in 2011 to co-ordinate global research and conservation efforts for these amazing animals, their close relatives and their habitat.

**Data Collection:** The Manta Trust has a number of research projects worldwide, incorporating population data, research on manta movements, and genetic analyses - to name a few - in order to better understand the general ecology of manta and mobula rays.



### THE HOTEL | TIGER SHARK RESIDENCE

Situated on Fuvahmulah, the Tigershark Residence is a newly built Hotel with high comfort standards. The Residence offers accommodation with free WiFi, air conditioning, and access to a garden with an outdoor swimming pool. All units also come with a seating area, a flat-screen TV and a private bathroom with a hair dryer, bath, hot tub, shower and free toiletries.

Guests here can enjoy a lovely American or Continental breakfast and are welcome to take advantage of the available hot tub.

The Residence also offers a children's playground, while car hire is also available for those interested in exploring the island on their own. English speaking staff are available 24-hour at the front desk to help making you stay unforgettable.

### BOOKING

To reserve your place on this Maldives Manta Expedition, please send an email to Niv Froman via [info@mantaexpeditions.com](mailto:info@mantaexpeditions.com).

Trip costs for this 7-nights expedition include bed and breakfast accommodation in double or twin room, 15 guided dives, transfer from and to Fuvahmulah harbour or airport, all taxes and lunch on every diving day.

\* Cost does not include return domestic flight Male-Fuvahmulah (290 USD) or ferry transfer Gan-Fuvahmulah (50 USD), rental of dive equipment, lunches on non-diving days, dinners and staff gratuities. Full board package is available at a surcharge of 150 USD per person.