



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE *The Visit Maldives Storytellers'* *Conference 2023*

Visit Maldives Storytellers' Conference Social Media Competition

The Visit Maldives Storytellers' Conference social media competition was created for the purpose of gathering like minded influencers, bloggers, content creators, writers and media specialists from around the world. The social media competition was depicted through the participants' take on the topic, 'Your dream vacation in the Maldives' in the form of photos, videos or illustrations shared on their public Facebook or Instagram.

The winners of the Visit Maldives Storytellers' Conference Social Media Competition were selected by a bipartisan panel of judges based on their submissions to our portal.

A total of 426 people from 64 different nationalities registered for the competition. Judging was conducted on 4th April, and the 50 winners were announced on 19th April. The final list of winners represent journalists, bloggers, content creators and social media influencers from 17 different countries including the Maldives.



- | | |
|----------------------|------------------|
| 1 Italy | 10 Cyprus |
| 2 Maldives | 11 Turkey |
| 3 Germany | 12 United States |
| 4 Australia | 13 Romania |
| 5 New Zealand | 14 Ireland |
| 6 Thailand | 15 Spain |
| 7 Russian Federation | 16 India |
| 8 Norway | 17 Mexico |
| 9 United Kingdom | |





The Visit Maldives Storytellers' Conference 2023 was an exceptional event celebrating the beauty and diversity of the Maldives as a destination. This four-day event provided a platform for journalists; bloggers; content creators; and media and industry professionals to gather, discourse, and explore the destination's extensive range of experiences and offerings, all while emphasising actionable sustainability. Held on the beach at Crossroads Maldives, the conference also served to showcase the Maldives' unique 'Redefining MICE' concept. Over 70+ participants from around the world participated in this event. The conference extensively highlighted the sustainability initiatives undertaken by the Maldives through the Sustainability Talks and three breakout sessions.



Participants gained valuable insights into the environmental conservation efforts and responsible tourism practices, showcasing the Maldives as a forward-thinking destination appealing to conscientious travellers.



International Speakers Line-up



Doug Lansky

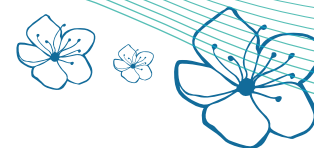
Doug Lansky is a renowned travel writer, tourism thought leader, and editor based in Stockholm. With over 20 years of experience, Doug has been published on leading publications such as the Guardian, Lonely Planet, and Skift. Doug has authored 10 books including 2 for Lonely Planet and 3 for Rough guides.



Jessica Nabongo

Jessica Nabongo is a master storyteller and pioneering travel expert as the first black woman to have travelled to every single country in the world. One of Travel and Leisure's 50 Notable People in Travel, Jessica uses her platform to educate and inspire other travellers to experience the world as a global community of travellers.





Four influential and internationally renowned storytellers were selected as the speakers for this event to inspire and engage the audience with their wealth of experience and thought-provoking ideas.



Vikas Swarup

Vikas Swarup, in addition to his diplomatic career, is a renowned author of three bestselling novels including "Q & A" which was adapted as the multiple Oscar winning "Slumdog Millionaire". His literary works have been translated into 47 languages worldwide.



Eleni Giokos

Based in Dubai, Eleni is renowned for her role as the presenter of "Connecting Africa" on CNN International, as well as her contributions to the "Marketplace Middle East" feature shows. She has over 15 years of experience spanning TV, digital, radio, and print media platforms.



Pop-up stalls

The conference featured pop-up stalls with arts, crafts, and traditional treasures inspired by the Sunny Side of Life. Participants were able to discover authentic products from Maldivian artisans such as the timeless artistry of 'Liyelaa Jehun' (lacquer work), an art tradition deeply rooted in Maldivian culture.

E'lhabe handmade jewellery, designed to be the perfect keepsake for every visitor to the Maldives. Each exquisite piece is meticulously crafted with care, reflecting the authentic essence of Maldivian artistry.



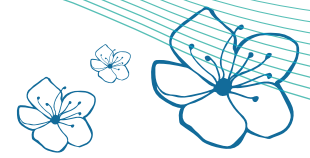
Seefromthesky products draw inspiration from the mesmerising wonders of nature, showcasing the enchanting beauty that surrounds us, featuring breathtaking moments and scenes from the Sunny Side of Life.



Ogaa, the eco-conscious bath and body brand handcrafted in the Maldives. Derived from the Dhivehi word "Ogaatherikan," meaning caring, Ogaa embodies a commitment to nurturing both people and the environment.



Gala Dinner



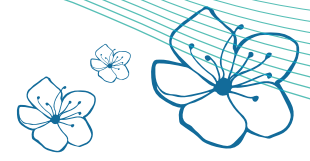
A very special networking Gala Dinner was arranged for all storytellers, speakers, and VIP Guests at The Beach Club of Crossroads Maldives in the evening following the conference. Featuring a fusion of Maldivian & international cuisine, with live music performance from a Maldivian band for entertainment, the prizes for the mini social media competitions held during the conference day were also awarded during the gala dinner.



Breakout sessions

The Visit Maldives Storytellers' Conference 2023 featured three breakout sessions where participants learned about sustainable development and tourism.



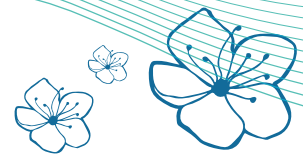


Healing the Earth

Held at the anchorage of Sheraton Maldives Full Moon Resort & Spa with their resident marine biologist, Ms Kate Sheridan. Participants of this breakout session were able to:

- Take part in coral propagation by adding to frame building and participating in a planting session
- Learn about the delicate balance of marine ecosystems in the Maldives and how to take part in conservation efforts
- Enjoy a relaxed snorkelling session in the beautiful house reef to see the progress of the propagation programmes



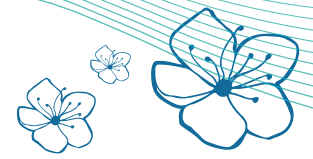


From the Sea to the Skillet

The gastronomy-centred breakout session, was held at the Atoll Villa Sandbank located just 10 minutes away from Crossroads Maldives. Participants of this breakout session:

- Watched traditional fish-filleting skills while listening to the story of how these local techniques emerged
- Explored the story and the merits of the Maldives' pole-and-line fisheries method; the most sustainable form of fishing
- Participated in a special cooking class, guided by a skilled local chef, and learned to make some of the most prized Maldivian culinary creations





Sail the Seas of Time

Thousands of Years of Maldivian History, held at Crossroads Maldives, allowed participants to truly experience the vibrant culture of the Maldives. Participants of this breakout session witnessed:

- A live demonstration of the ancient art of Maldivian embroidery weaving (Kasabu Viyun) and tried on traditional Maldivian attire.
- Exploring the local heritage and customs with a live-action retelling of the tragic Maldivian love story of Dhon Hiyala and Alifulhu
- A unique 'wish making' tradition where participants were escorted to the beach with traditional dhandi jehun dances .

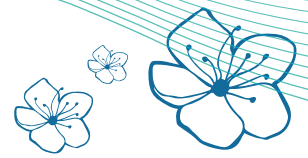


Sideline activities

One of the most remarkable achievements of the conference was the extensive coverage of different regions of the Maldives on various platforms, generating hundreds of social media posts, unique stories, and creative travel ideas. Following the conference day, participants had the opportunity to journey to eight unique regions of the Maldives, gaining first-hand insights into authentic Maldivian culture, diverse stay offerings, and the true versatility of experiences offered. The event generated significant online buzz and captured the attention of a worldwide audience, serving as a powerful marketing tool to invite potential new travellers from around the world to explore the Sunny Side of Life.



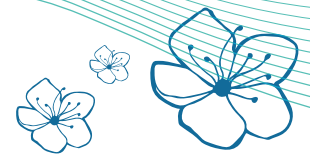
Haa Alifu and Haa Dhaalu



Known for its historically significant islands, pristine beaches, and vibrant coral reefs, this captivating region offered a myriad of experiences. Some highlights include:

- Exploring agricultural farms and guided bicycle tours
- Attending a biology lecture at a conservation centre
- A sunset cruise on a traditional Maldivian Dhoani and learning traditional fishing techniques
- Snorkelling at the famous Filladhoo shipwreck.
- Indulging in water sports and delicious cuisine in the beautiful Hondaafushi Island Resort.



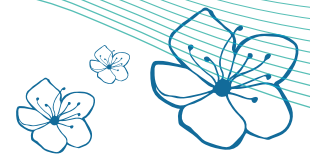


Laamu Atoll

The largest in the Maldives with 88 islands, known for unspoiled reefs and vivid wetlands, the atoll provided perfect snorkelling and diving opportunities. Some highlights include:

- Island tours, water sports, and cultural experiences including trying the famous "golha riha" curry unique to Laamu.
- Exploring the SHELL facility, sustainability garden, and Earth Lab's experimentation area at Six Senses Laamu.
- Snorkelling with marine biologists from the Maldives Underwater Initiative
- Beachside BBQ dinner with locals
- Special yoga sessions and farewell breakfast with tantalising cuisine.





Ari Atoll

One of our largest atolls, comprising Alifu Alifu Atoll and Alifu Dhaalu Atoll. Alifu Alifu showcases lush landscapes stretching into the powder blue sky, while Alifu Dhaalu boasts the unique South Ari Marine Park. Some highlights include:

- Engaging in a private coral planting workshop and learning about sustainability practices on a resort tour
- Mediterranean cuisine at Beach Rouge
- Swim with gentle giants during a whale shark discovery trip to the South Ari Marine Park
- Indulging in thrilling water sports and islands tours
- Morning yoga and pampering at the LUX* ME Spa at LUX* South Ari Atoll



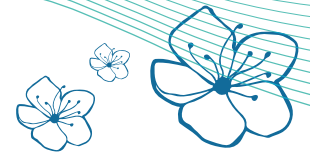


Vaavu Atoll

A nature lover's haven with its excellent sports fishing, untouched islands, and vibrant local culture. Some highlights include:

- Seaplane journey to the stunning Alimatha Resort complete with a resort tour
- Exciting cruises aboard the Ocean Sapphire liveaboard, travelling to the best secret spots in the Atoll
- Enjoying local cuisine, sunset fishing, and thrilling water sports activities
- Snorkelling at Vaavu Keyodhoo Shipwreck and a nurse shark snorkelling experience
- Line fishing, a dolphin cruise, and sandbank excursions with beachside dinners created cherished moments.



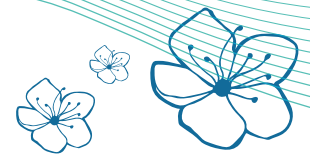


Kaafu Atoll

Also known as Malé Atoll, the capital atoll of the Maldives housing the main airport, offers a captivating experience of rich heritage, exciting experiences, and diverse cuisine. Some highlights include:

- A traditional welcome at Wish Hotel Huraa Guest-house, followed by stays at the luxurious OBLU Lobigili and delightful Taj Exotica Resort.
- Exploring protected mangroves and historical landmarks with guided tours
- Indulging in underwater dining at OBLU Lobigili and adopting a coral at Taj Exotica
- Diving with nurse sharks, spa experiences, and Maldivian-themed beach dinners
- Visiting historical sites and prominent landmarks in the Greater Malé area





Addu Atoll

A lush haven beyond the equator, with 24 islands and some of the richest history and cultural diversity found in the Maldives offering unique surroundings and even more unique experiences. Some highlights include:

- Getting the certificate for flying past the equator and a traditional welcome in Addu City
- Visiting Addu Nature Park, home to the rare white tern Dhondheeni found only in this atoll
- Staying at the chic Pebbles Inn guesthouse, and savouring dinner overlooking the Link Road.
- Dolphin tours, culinary delights, exploration of monuments and ruins, and a candlelit dinner by the seaside.
- Aqua yoga, house-reef snorkelling, and culinary delights from Grand Park Kodhipparu

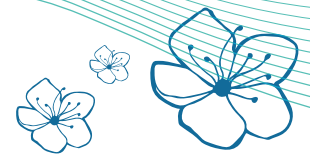


Fuvahmulah

Located in the south of Maldives, this is the only one-island atoll in the country and a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve boasting lush mangroves, lakes, and wetlands. Some highlights include:

- Staying at the charming Fuvahmulah Retreat, immersing themselves in the island's natural splendours.
- Tiger shark sightings with guided tours of the 'Tiger Zoo' area
- Visiting the Maldives' only beach break and picking out the unique lovely smooth pebbles found only in Fuvahmulah in Maldives
- Island tours, rejuvenating mud baths, historical site visits, and delightful BBQ dinners with warm-hearted locals.
- Yam picking adventures at the local farms and cultural nights with locals.



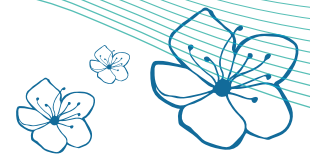


Raa Group 1

Arriving via seaplane at Cora Cora Maldives, a delicious lunch at Acquapazza Italian Restaurant and a guided snorkelling experience at the House Reef.

- La Dolce Vita Meet & Greet on Acquapazza beach, followed by a serene evening tea while watching the sunset and a delightful dinner at Teien Japanese Restaurant.
- Trip to the 'Tsunami Ghost Island', and exploring the local island Rasgetheemu, delving into Maldivian culture and heritage.
- Rejuvenating sound healing sessions at MOKSHA Spa & Wellbeing Centre





Raa Group 2

Incredible stays at JOALI Being and Furaveri Island Resort with traditional welcome rituals and a delightful cuisine

- Stand-up paddling around house reefs, serene sunset yoga at Wellness Village, and private sound bath meditations
- Resort tours, sandbank visits, indulging in a farm-to-table cooking session, and beachside BBQ dinners
- Exploring the local island of Raa Meedhoo including a visit the UNESCO heritage Coral Stone Mosque



Visit Maldives Storytellers' Conference 2023

307 million
Campaign reach

110 million
Social Media reach



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