Manta
EXPEDITIONS

30/09 - 10/10/2021
Maldives

Cross Oceans Collaboration

by Jess Haines & Guilherme Kodja

This October 2021, the Manta Trusts affiliated Brazilian Marine Megafauna Project, joined forces with the Maldivian Manta Ray Project and Manta Expeditions team to organise a trip of a lifetime, in search of our beloved reef manta rays.

Guilherme Kodja, the project leader in Brazil and for sub-regional project Mantas De Ilhabela, gathered a group of avid divers and travelled 13,800km across the globe to reach the paradise Island Nation that is the Maldives. For some this was a first time visit to this part of the world, and they sure bought with them the good luck. With the monsoonal storms behind us the new arrivals were greeted with clear blue skies, calm waters and the warming sun lighting up the day. As we all boarded onto our floating home for the next ten days, Luxury Liveaboard Conte Max, Jessica Haines, Project Manager in the Maldives greeted her new dive buddies and welcomed them to her world.

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Setting off to a roaring start the first dive of the trip did not disappoint! A breath-taking check dive where fourteen manta rays welcomed our new Brazilian friends under water at dive site, Lankan Manta Point in Malé Atoll! Blown away by the sheer size, beauty, and elegance of these rays we all fell in love a little bit deeper with these gentle giants. Big smiles and loud cheers back onboard, we were all ecstatic to see what the rest of the Maldives had to offer as we began our journey further north to the atolls of Raa and Baa.

Part of the expedition is not only to swim with the amazing marine life that the Maldives has to offer, but to learn more about the reef manta ray population that resides here. During the 10-day expedition we encountered an incredible number of 115 manta rays across each of the five atolls that we visited! Through our collaborative effort we were able to identify 90 of these manta individuals through photographing their unique spot pattern on their bellies. Together we recorded new injuries, first time cross-atoll migrations, five pregnant females and most importantly three completely new individuals to the Maldivian Manta Database!!

We had the most mesmerising encounters underwater, from cleaning stations, the start of a courtship event, and two mass feeding aggregations, we saw it all! The calmness of watching something so brilliantly beautiful and nature at its finest is a memory that will stay with us all for a long time to come. Manta Expeditions aren't just about diving though. It's about making new friends, building a bond over the same passion, and creating memories to last a lifetime. We smiled, we laughed, we danced on uninhabited islands, we savoured the beautiful Maldivian sunset and we shared so many special moments over the space of ten days.

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