

MALDIVES

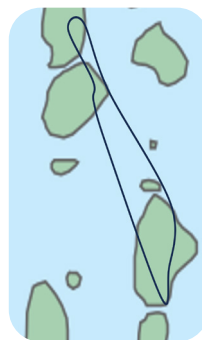
MANTA RAY SNORKELING CONSERVATION CRUISE

15 - 22
September 2024
(7 nights)

2,125 USD*
per person

OVERVIEW

Cruise the island paradise of the Maldives, encounter graceful manta rays and experience the ultimate in marine conservation and snorkeling adventures. This small group snorkeling cruise of **no more than 10 people**, is perfect for couples, solo travelers and friends with a passion for the ocean, marine life and responsible travel. This expedition is born from the **collaboration between the award winning, responsible and sustainable tour company Secret Paradise and the Manta Trust**, and aims to provide more than a conventional beach holiday by immersing you in the culture and traditions of the Maldives, its amazing marine life, friendly local communities and provide you with a greater understanding and knowledge of our fragile environment. The expedition has been specifically timed to coincide with the most productive monsoon winds and lunar currents, which strongly influence the movements and feeding habits of reef manta rays. Using the knowledge of the **Manta Trust** we will try to find these feeding aggregations and allow you to experience the wonder of immersing yourself amongst a feeding frenzy of these giants!



ITINERARY

Day One:

Upon arriving in the Maldives, you will be met by the Tour Leader at Male International Airport and board MV Akoya Pearl. After settling in, we set sail through North Male Atoll. **Sit back and enjoy your first views of the many islands** unfolding around you. Your initial snorkeling experience will not only allow you to test out your equipment and for your tour leader to assess your skills, but will provide a taste of what is to come on our week-long voyage. The tour leader will provide a safety briefing on responsible snorkeling and act as your 'spotter' pointing out marine life that may not have caught your eye. Coral reefs are fragile ecosystems so **learning how to snorkel responsibly** can help minimize your impact on the marine environment and protect the delicate balance of marine life. In the evening, a **presentation by Manta Trust expert** focuses on the history of the Manta Trust, their role in manta ray conservation and Secret Paradise's involvement with the Local Island Fund for the Environment (LIFE).

Day Two:

A new day begins with an early navigation crossing from North Male Atoll into Baa Atoll. Following breakfast as we cruise the ocean wave, your Tour Leaders will introduce you to the **work of the Olive Ridley project**, providing an insight into their environmental monitoring and turtle studies. They will also share the **turtle snorkeling** code of conduct, preparing you for responsible turtle encounters later today at Dhonfanu, where these ancient creatures are often encountered. Located on the south eastern side of Baa Atoll, Hanifar Bay is part of a channel close to the local island of Dharavandoo. The bay is a hotspot for manta rays between May – November. During this period, plankton gets trapped in the bay due to its funnel shape and this **high concentration of plankton attracts both manta rays and whale sharks**. This **UNESCO biosphere reserve** has been designated as a Marine Protected Area since 2011 and there are strict regulations in place to protect and preserve this amazing wonder of nature. Your Tour Leaders will brief you on how to ensure any encounters are positive for both you and the manta rays. This evening a further informative **presentation will provide insight into manta ray biology**, the Maldives manta ray population and how research contributes to both a greater understanding of the species and environmental decisions being made by Maldivian government bodies.





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Day Three:

This morning if conditions are in our favor we will return to [Hanifaru Bay](#) for more manta ray encounters. Be sure to bring along your camera skills to assist in obtaining photo IDs. Alternatively, we will embark on a [fish-ID snorkel at Anga Faru](#), adding a new dimension to your marine exploration and the opportunity to increase your knowledge of tropical reef fishes. This afternoon we visit the [uninhabited island of Huraa Faru](#). As you step onto its shores, you will feel like an intrepid explorer, discovering a place that feels like it belongs only to you. The island's beaches will invite you to wander and explore their hidden corners. Unfortunately, plastic is often not hidden and we will spend time completing a beach clean-up activity, ensuring we leave a positive mark on the island. The act of cleaning is a powerful reminder of the importance of responsible tourism and environmental stewardship. As we cruise to our anchorage point of Veyofushi, [learn about the biology and behavior of whale sharks](#), the research efforts of Maldives Whale Shark Research Program and the importance of protecting these gentle giants.

Day Four:

Today provides further opportunities to encounter [manta rays at Veyofushi and Reethi Beach lagoons](#). When we do spot them, following the manta ray code of conduct we will snorkel alongside them. A truly magical experience. As part of the data capture process, assist in collecting valuable information such as size, behavior, markings and photo IDs. This hands-on experience contributes directly to the ongoing research efforts of Manta Trust. Cruising north into Raa Atoll we head for the [beautiful reef of Kottefaru](#), where, if we are lucky, we will encounter feeding manta rays. Manta rays are filter feeders meaning that they eat by swimming with their mouths open and taking in food from the water around them. As large animals they need a lot of food to sustain themselves and their anatomy is designed to process over two million pieces of plankton per day by filter-feeding! The Maldives archipelago is globally unique in terms of biological diversity, the diversity of the reef structures it possesses, and their mode of evolution. It is also extremely vulnerable to future sea-level and climate change. This evening we [look at the geology of the Maldives and the projects in place to build climate resilience](#).

Day Five:

Staying in Raa Atoll we will conduct [explorative snorkeling](#) at Dhikkuredhdhoo Finolhu, Boduhaiykodi and Madivaafaru. Whilst never a guarantee, we may encounter manta rays and following the manta ray code we will add to our collection of data research. Our snorkeling activities will also provide an opportunity to observe different coral reef formations, encounter a variety of fish species, and appreciate the intricate balance of these underwater ecosystems. This afternoon we delve into the [work of NGO Miyaru](#), custodians of the protection of sharks in the Maldives. The Maldives is one of the most important shark sanctuaries in the Indian Ocean and home to globally significant populations of large predatory sharks, including several critically endangered species. While sharks are protected from targeted fishing within the nation's waters these elasmobranchs continue to face anthropogenic pressure from climate change, pollution and entanglement, interaction with vessels, rising tourism numbers, as well as habitat loss due to land reclamation. Gain an insight into environmental monitoring and shark studies. The day ends with a [BBQ beach dinner](#), under the stars at Dhorangali.

Day Six:

As the sun rises, we start our journey [back into Baa Atoll](#) where we have the opportunity to [visit the local island of Kamadhoo](#). This is a small but beautiful island rich in vegetation. As you wander the sandy lanes with your tour leader you will witness the community going about their daily lives and will learn how culture and tradition remains the back bone to their daily rhythm and routines. Kamadhoo is part of Soneva Namoonaa project which focuses on reducing waste, recycling and reusing. The island segregates its waste and this process is managed by the council and the local people themselves. Finally, stop by a local cafe to refresh yourself with a cool Kurumba (coconut). [Afternoon snorkeling at Dhaandhoo Reef](#) provides another mesmerizing underwater encounter. Discover a coral reef that is teeming with fish and marine-life. The Maldives is rich in marine life but unfortunately, our marine life is under threat because of activities carried out by humans. This evening, your tour leader will highlight the harmful practices that are pushing the balance in the eco system and what we can do to limit the impact.

Day Seven:

This morning we cruise from Baa Atoll into [North Male Atoll](#). While cruising we will spend some time ensuring all our trip data has been recorded and review our findings. On route to Hulhumale, which will be our final anchorage of the tour, we stop off at the [local island of Huraa to visit its mangrove lake](#) and learn why mangroves play such an important role in the eco-system of the Maldives. There will also be the opportunity to see how fish is dried and taste fresh rihakaru paste, a love it or hate it delicacy! A final [snorkeling encounter at Banana Reef](#), together with all the insider knowledge you have gained will leave you with a deeper understanding and connection to the beauty and fragility of our marine environment and we hope a desire to protect this remarkable paradise.

Day Eight:

Departure to Male International Airport.



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ON-BOARD MANTA EXPERT

As on all Manta Expeditions, a Manta Trust scientist will be onboard for its entire duration, offering everyone the opportunity to interact and learn from a leading manta expert.



The presence of a Manta Trust scientist onboard will enhance your experience in a number of ways:

- motivate and inspire you, by learning about the marine ecosystems you will be exploring
- gain access to an accumulated wealth of knowledge and expertise, providing you the opportunity to become actively involved in cutting-edge scientific research.
- offer you an educational and much more rewarding experience by making your underwater encounters more personal, and by involving you first-hand in marine research and conservation.
- be environmentally aware and proactive and become an active member of an initiative which stands to have strong implications for the ongoing persistence for manta rays worldwide.

Collectively the Manta Trust and Manta Expeditions teams possess over two decades of experience working in the Maldives, studying its manta population and marine life and have assembled a vast amount of knowledge and expertise, knowledge you will have access to on this expedition.

A core focus of the expeditions is not only to provide close encounters with manta rays but to enthuse and educate divers in marine conservation issues and the environment surrounding them. Through a series of activities and presentations on topics covering local marine species and habitats led by the Manta Trust expert, you are sure to leave with an increased awareness of the threats facing our oceans and, perhaps more importantly, how you can help.

Using the knowledge of the Manta Trust scientists you will gain a brand-new perspective to diving and experiencing the underwater world; by understanding what you see you will gain a better appreciation and love for the ocean and its creatures. Ultimately, with the guidance of the Manta Trust researcher you will have the chance to give something back to the ocean which we believe is fundamental considering how much we take from it!



CITIZEN SCIENCE - GET INVOLVED!

On this expedition, you'll have the opportunity to experience and participate in [cuttingedge 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 mantas.

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.

SECRET PARADISE

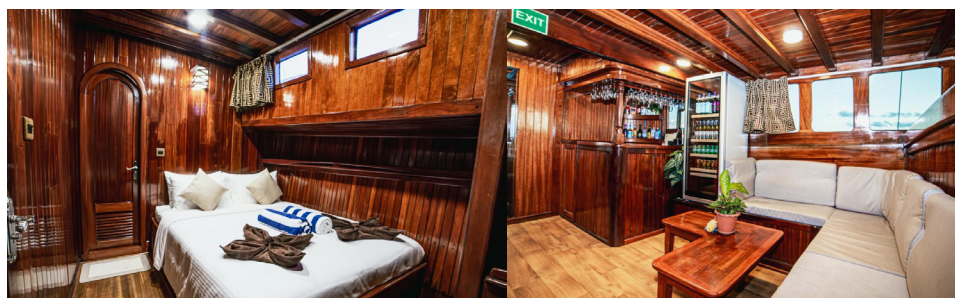
Secret Paradise is an [award winning, responsible and sustainable tour company](#) operating in the Maldives since 2012. In 2023 we were awarded silver at ICRT [Responsible Tourism Awards](#) in the category [Best for Nature-Positive Tourism](#). In 2022 [Wanderlust](#) ranked us in their [Top 10 Sustainable Initiative Tour Operators](#). In 2020 we were commended in the 'Meaningful Connections' category [World Responsible Tourism Awards](#) and long listed for the 2015 'Best for engaging people and culture' category, [World Responsible Tourism Awards](#).



Secret Paradise guests travel responsibly, absorb, engage and explore, leaving the Maldives having trodden lightly on its environment and contributed in a meaningful way.

THE VESSEL | AKOYA PEARL

Akoya Pearl features 5 cabins, including 2 Superior, 2 Deluxe and 1 Master all with private bathroom and a/c. Akoya's warm wooden decor dining area offers a variety of local and international cuisines and the bar area serves beer, wine, cocktails, and spirits. The vessel also offers comfortable indoor and outdoor lounge areas where guests can enjoy a relaxing moment. Up top is also a sun deck with sunbeds and loungers for those who enjoy catching some sun throughout the day.



BOOKING

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

Trip costs for this 7-nights expedition includes transfers Male airport/vessel and return, accommodation in twin/double cabin, full board meals with unlimited drinking water, american coffee and tea, one evening bbq on a deserted island, snorkeling activities, and local island tours.

* Cost does not include international flights, 10% Service Charge, 16% GST tax, Green Tax (USD 42), Hanifaru park entry fee (USD 20 per person) and crew tips. Single cabin supplement 50% of per person rate.