



The atolls and islets of the Maldives, strung across the Indian Ocean like a glittering necklace 700km southwest of Sri Lanka, are famous for their beauty. So when you come across one whose name means “beautiful island” in the local Dhivehi language, it’s reasonable to expect something very special.

That special island is Reethi Rah. And luckily for us it’s home to a beautiful and exclusive retreat, itself a jewel in the crown of One&Only Resorts, an award-winning group with properties in some of the most gorgeous locations on earth.

How special is One&Only Maldives at Reethi Rah? Well, it was recently named “Number One in the World” in the *Condé Nast Traveller Readers’ Awards* 2007, as well as “Favourite Overseas Leisure Hotel Middle East, Africa and the Indian Ocean Islands” and “Favourite Overseas Hotel Spa”.

Sol Kerzner, chairman of One&Only’s parent company, Kerzner International, showered praise on Reethi Rah’s general manager, Michael Payne and his team. “I continue to say One&Only Reethi Rah, from all the resorts built over the years, is the one that takes the cake,” Kerzner said. “Every aspect of what they offer our guests matches with what I think is the most beautiful spot in the Maldives and the stunning architecture by Jean-Michel Gathy.”

SLICE OF HEAVEN

An exclusive retreat in the Maldives takes the cake for beauty, privacy and luxury.



Above & right: Water Villas feature netted wraparound hammocks suspended over the water on the outer rim of the deck allowing for breezy sunbathing or relaxed stargazing.

Opposite page, top and far right: A private outdoor pool shaded by tropical trees and stretching towards the ocean adds to the allure of the Beach Villas.

'Maruhaba!'

The chairman may well be prejudiced, but here's no denying that One&Only Reethi Rah takes the cake if it's privacy, luxury, beauty and space you're after. From the moment you arrive – greeted with the traditional welcome, "maruhaba" (spoken with right hand on heart) – there's little to wish for that this stunning resort doesn't already provide.

The 44-hectare island in the North Malé Atoll is an all-villa hideaway: 130 of them, placed discreetly along the shore – 98 Beach Villas secreted amid lush tropical greenery and 32 Water Villas set above the clear, sheltered waters of the lagoon. Among the largest resort villas in the world, each is detached, expansive and equally luxurious (37 have private pools).

The Gathy-designed villas have a contemporary elegance; they're stylish to the

Western eye, but with an Asian influence that blends clean lines with the skilful use of natural materials such as coconut shell, sea grass, silk, rattan, teak, mahogany, terrazzo and thatch. Generous outdoor spaces range from beach verandas to private swimming pools and big over-water decks.

The freestanding villas feature the latest technologies – flat-screen LCD interactive televisions with satellite channels, CD and DVD players, surround-sound audio, iPod connections, high-speed broadband, espresso machines – and are designed with high, airy ceilings and bamboo arches. Every villa has a designated Villa Host who's on call 24 hours a day, while 650 staff members are on site to take care of a guest's every whim. We thought that was a pretty impressive staff-to-guest ratio.





Innovative and fresh cuisine is prepared with passion and flair.



Fabulous food

The food at One&Only is eclectic and imaginative. There are three restaurants, including Tapasake, which specialises in light, modern, Japanese food served by a saxophone-playing chef descended from a long line of Japanese sushi masters. Then there's Fanditha ("magic" in Dhivehi), a laid-back restaurant and bar on the beach, serving Middle Eastern food. Here, carpets are spread on the sand and you can lounge on soft daybeds and hammocks.

You can, of course, also dine in the privacy of your own villa on food cooked by a chef with a mobile oven from one of eight pantries around the island set up to cater for private parties.

The transparent 18,000-bottle wine cellar, meanwhile, stocked with more than 700 premium labels, is available for wine tastings and dinner parties. Beach barbecues,

Champagne parties and gourmet dinners can also be organised.

If you're really serious about food, though, you can hone your culinary skills at recently introduced cookery classes. The resort's international chefs give three classes a week, each showcasing a different type of cuisine. If you want to learn how to make a really great curry, for example, slip on a One&Only Maldives chef's apron and head for the Reethi Restaurant on a Sunday morning for the Curry Experience, led by a Thai, Indian, Maldivian or Sri Lankan chef. Guests learn practical skills in the kitchen and receive recipe cards so they can recreate dishes at home.

Another class features sushi and sashimi with Chef Hiro from Tapasake, while Fanditha's Lebanese chef, Issa, teaches Lebanese mezze at the outdoor barbecue kitchen.



Arabesque Fanditha, an exotic, boho-chic beachside spot, serves a Middle Eastern-influenced menu of mezze, chargrills and salads.



Lagoon living

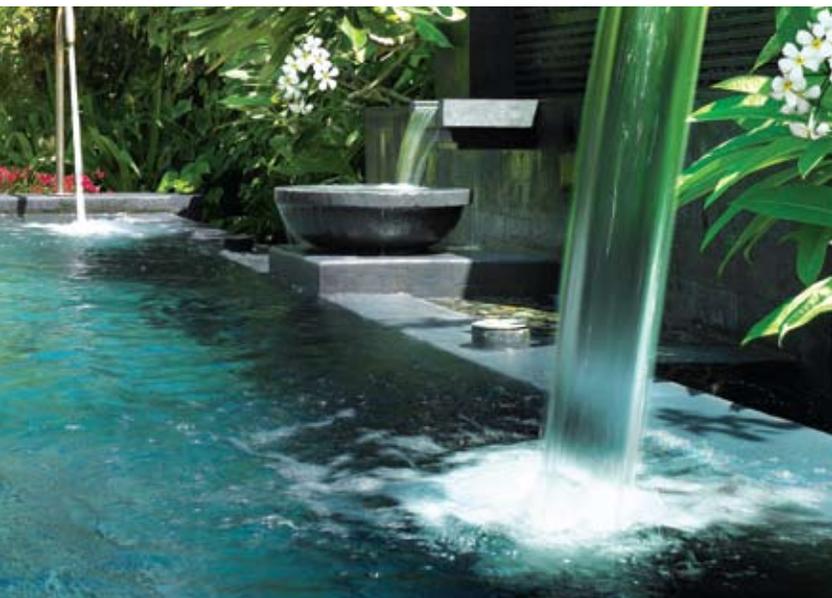
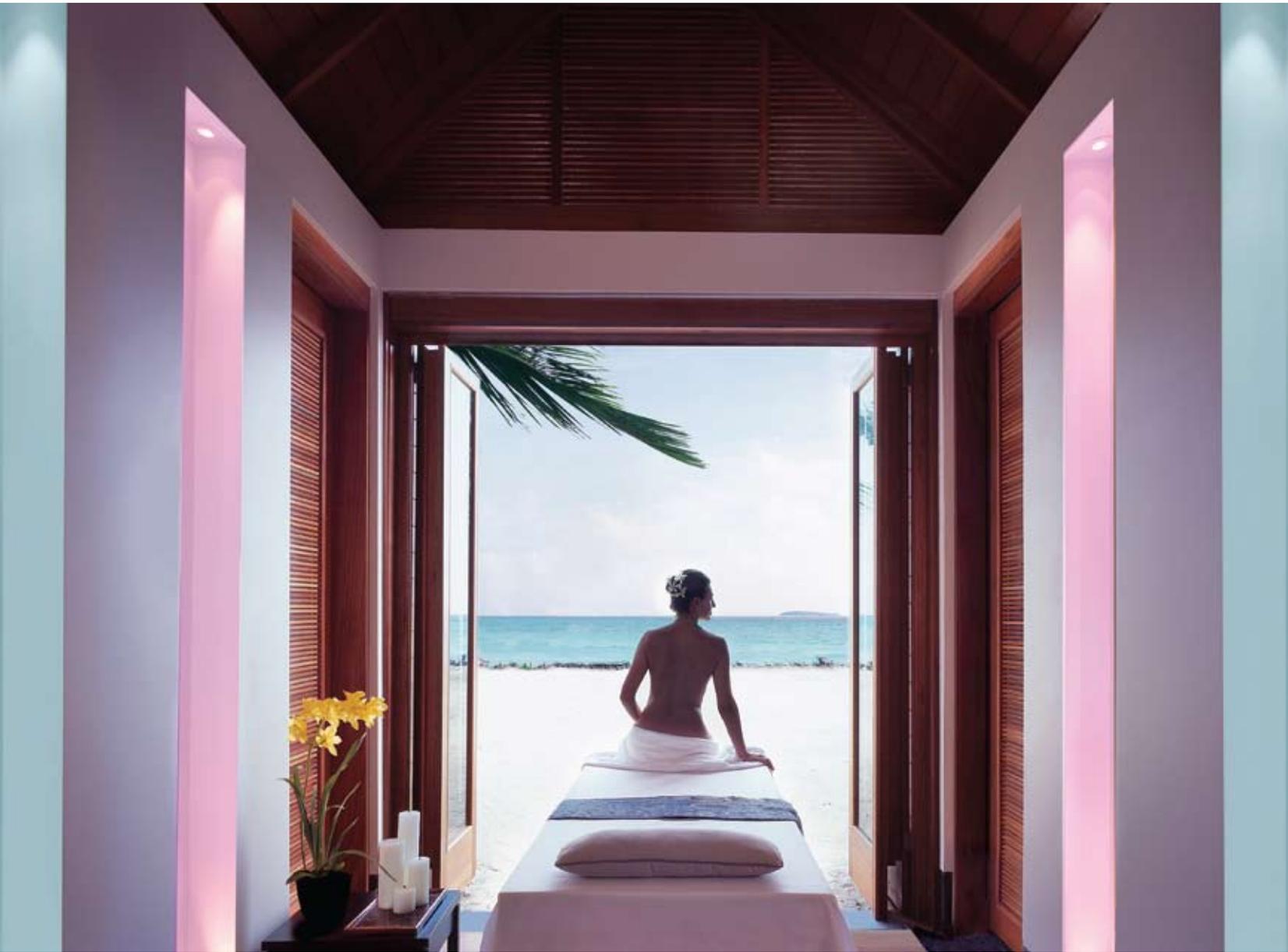
Apart from cooking classes, there are plenty of other things to occupy guests on Reethi Rah. Canoes, kayaks, pedaloes, windsurfers and snorkelling equipment are free to be used whenever you're in the mood.

The lagoon and house reef are home to a huge variety of fish. Snorkellers encounter turtles, white-tipped sharks, butterfly fish, Napoleon wrasses and tuna – lots of these – among other species. If you're into scuba diving, the Maldives are among the world's top scuba destinations and Reethi Rah has a dozen or more excellent dive sites within easy reach of the resort.

On dry land, there's beach volleyball, football, table tennis, croquet and petanque. The Peter Burwash Tennis Academy has two floodlit courts where professional coaches offer expert tuition, or will play with guests in need of a partner.

Children from four to 11 are kept busy at KidsOnly, which has its own clubhouse, swimming pool, dining area and supervised activities. Teenagers, meanwhile, can choose a tailor-made programme of sports and excursions at the recreation area, ClubOne.





Wellbeing

For the less active, there are a dozen white-sand beaches to collapse on. Or perhaps a whole day of pampering might hit the spot? The 9,500-square-metre One&Only Spa by ESPA (ESPA being internationally-renowned UK spa specialists) is a destination in its own right, where the well-heeled might spend a day being pampered in magnificent surroundings. Open-air pavilions in the spa gardens allow the sound of the waves in to help wash away stress. All treatments are inspired by ancient Eastern philosophies combined with modern relaxation and rejuvenation techniques. Couples who want complete seclusion can book an ultimate private spa experience in one of two over-water spa suites linked to the island by a wooden walkway.

Feeling relaxed yet? One&Only Maldives at Reethi Rah can do that to you. 🍹

www.oneandonlyresorts.com