



Travel review

A perfect piece of paradise

Situated in the middle of the Indian Ocean, the Maldives consist of 1,190 islands and coral cays clustered around 26 atolls (ring shaped coral reefs) scattered over 90,000 square kilometres. With only 200 of the islands inhabited, Kurumba was the very first private island resort to open and has been welcoming guests looking for natural beauty and relaxing vacations for over 40 years.

The last time I visited Kurumba in 1995 I made a promise to myself that I'd return, and now I was back. The resort was stunning then, but it is now absolutely astounding!

Just a four-hour direct flight from Dubai my teenage daughter and I arrived mid-afternoon and were immediately transferred to the resort by speed boat. Kurumba is one of the closest islands to Male airport and the transfer is only 10 minutes. First impressions were over-exceeded as we drifted up to the resort's private dock where we were welcomed with cold facecloths and a home-made coconut sorbet.

After a speedy check-in, we were escorted to our stunning beachfront room situated just steps from the gently lapping sea, enabling us to kick off our shoes and enjoy a dip within an hour of landing. After a 20-minute walk around the perimeter of the island to get our bearings, and a nap on the loungers just outside our room under the shade of a coconut tree, we were wondering if we were the only guests, as it was so private and peaceful. Just before sunset, we wandered a stone's throw away on the soft white sand to Athiri beach bar and enjoyed a few sunset cocktails whilst listening to the fabulous live sounds of Duo Saxophone.

Nestled on the gorgeous sandy beach, and looking out on the clear aqua blue lagoon, our tropical beachfront room was extremely comfortable. The interiors were consistent with an island theme with wooden floors and stunning high cathedral ceilings. The bathroom was luxurious with a unique al fresco shower as well as an indoor shower, bathtub and his and her vanities. We loved the many special thoughtful touches that included a beach bag, complimentary drinking water and a coffee machine, as well as a wet bag for our cozzies after a quick dip on our last day. The rooms also have free wi-fi and a flat screen TV, but we were there to relax and get away from it all.

All rooms come with breakfast, but you can add on a variety of dining packages from half and full board to an all-inclusive dining experience that incorporates the resort's speciality restaurants. We enjoyed breakfast at both Vihamanaa restaurant which offers a full international breakfast buffet, and at Thila restaurant with premium à la carte items such as eggs benedict, and a full English gourmet style breakfast with Champagne and fresh juices. Lunch and dinner can also be taken at Vihamanaa, with a wonderful array of different buffet options available daily. There is a variety of dining packages available at

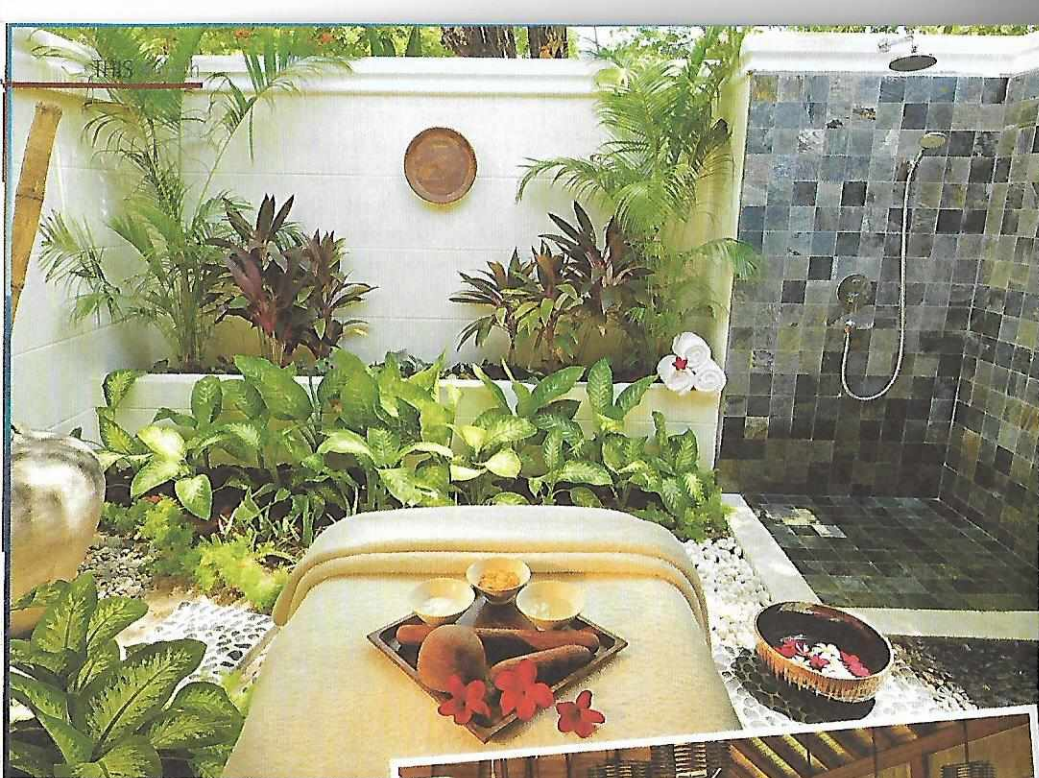
Kurumba, and with more than eight restaurants, there really is something for every taste. From impressive views and freshly grilled seafood at Thila to teppanyaki served over the water at Hamakaze, there are endless options with lots of healthy choices and many vegetarian and gluten free items. The food alone is worth the trip!

The evenings don't stop after dinner at Kurumba. This is the place to dance under the stars and the resort offers the best of live evening entertainment. Regular events include a fun DJ night, live bands, jazz and blues nights, local Maldivian Dance night, karaoke and film night.

During the day, there is an abundance of activities to enjoy on the island.

Snorkelling - You can explore the incredible underwater wonders and the unique ecology by boat, snorkelling or diving. The lagoon is surrounded by wave breakers, which reduce waves and currents for ideal





snorkelling conditions. We signed up for the Snorkelling Safari where small coral outcrops abound, filled with vibrant marine life. Just beyond the breakers, the dramatic drop offers an even greater variety of coral, home to colourful fish, stingrays and turtles. The beautiful coral reefs are the feeding ground for a huge range of marine life which feeds off the nutrient rich coral. This is home to 110 species of fish, turtles, reef sharks and dolphins and 187 coral species. You can also attend a guided night snorkelling expedition. All snorkelling equipment is provided and a GoPro or underwater camera is an absolute must.

Diving - The Maldives attracts divers from all over the world and Kurumba has one of the premier snorkelling and diving resorts in the Maldives. The dive centre offers expertly-led courses and tours by world-renowned diving company - Euro Divers. Many of the best dive



sites are within a five to 30-minute boat trip from the resort.

By boat - Options include a trip around the island in a glass bottom boat; the sunset Dolphin Cruise where we were treated to a playful display when we crossed paths with a pod of dolphins; sunset reef fishing; big game fishing; a Castaway Picnic on a remote sandbank; and Sports Fishing. You can also take a tour of Male or take a seaplane flight for the ultimate photo opportunity.

When it's time to get out of the water, which for us was not that often, there is much to do and see. Kurumba's gardens are full of natural beauty and wildlife, and during our walks through the property, we encountered a flying fox fruit bat with a wing span of at least one metre, and a variety of beautiful birds. The shaded paths and lovingly nurtured tropical gardens are also home to the island's stunning orchid nursery.

The Majaa Recreation Club invites you to choose from more activities than you will probably have time for! From the two swimming pools, gym, tennis, yoga, Tai Chi, paddle boarding, kayaking, wakeboarding, jet skiing, parasailing, tube and banana boat, sailing, volley ball, ping pong, cooking demos, arts and crafts, painting classes and fitness classes there is something for everyone. Children are not forgotten, and The Majaa Kids' club is led by specialist staff and have a packed activity programme to keep mini guests entertained.

The resort's Veli spa allows you to indulge in original spa treatments either in the spa or under the gazebo that juts into the lagoon. The

name Kurumba is taken from the species of coconut palm which grows in abundance on the island and they use 100% coconut oil in many of their spa treatments. The Signature Massage was so good that we went back for more.

Being located close to the Equator, the temperature is a pretty consistent 29 to 32 degrees Celsius making the Maldives a year round destination. There are two seasons - the wet season (May to November) and the dry season (December to April). We were there in July and experienced plenty of sunshine with clear skies and scattered white clouds and a few brief showers that did not interfere with our holiday at all.

The resort caters to guests of all ages, from couples, honeymooners, friends, families and small groups, or in our case, a touch of mother and daughter bonding time. Kurumba is an island that teems with life above and below the water. The resort offers more than just sun, sand and sea. It's full of surprises, fun activities, lively entertainment and smiling faces. I will certainly not leave it too long before I return.

Visit www.kurumba.com for full details. □

