

NALADHU PRIVATE ISLAND *Maldives*

This exclusive private island resort surrounded by pristine sea and snow-white sand features colonial-inspired style

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On arrival at the private jetty, the traditional Maldivian greeting of the Bodu Beru drums is a warm island welcome to the natural haven that is Naladhu.

Naladhu literally translated from Maldivian means 'beautiful little island' and that is an understatement. Floating on the edge of an aqua lagoon shared with sister islands Anantara Dhigu and Anantara Veli, Naladhu Private Island Maldives is located in the South Malé Atoll and impresses immediately on arrival. During the 35-minute speedboat ride from the airport – the island can also be reached by private yacht or chartered seaplane – the stunning azure hues of teal, turquoise and cyan of the Indian Ocean set the relaxed tone for an unforgettable destination.

On approach you can hear the Bodu Beru, the rhythm of the big drums played by the staff, a traditional Maldivian welcome to greet you at the jetty. Stepping onto the private island is stepping into a natural haven of calm. With only 20 villas spaced around the island's perimeter, and sandy trails meandering through coconut groves and shrubbery to buffer them all, it feels like you have the island to yourself. The ocean-facing villas, each named

after an indigenous plant, are secluded sanctuaries with plenty of cosy corners to savour.

Sitting outside each villa, as on the jetty upon arrival, is a nam jai water jar with a ladle made from a coconut shell. A nod to Anantara's Thai heritage, this is the Thai custom of leaving a bowl of water outside the home so that passing travellers can have a drink – the symbol is actually reflected in the Anantara logo. For island life, this is often dressed with hibiscus blooms and used to wash the sand off your feet before entering a home. As you step into the thatched-roof villas through latticed doors, which open onto teak floors overlaid with indigenous carpets, the

Clockwise from below The entrance to the two-bedroom pool residence villa features a wood gabled ceiling and colonial-style rattan and bamboo high-back chairs. The main living room for this villa has more contemporary furniture with Maldivian cultural accessories. The Ocean House with Pool features an outdoor bathtub and green seashell-print soft furnishings, bringing nature inside.



Latticed doors, gabled roofs and antique furnishings reminiscent of the island's colonial past create a cosy ambience





colonial-inspired décor becomes apparent. Whitewashed walls that rise to gabled roofs, carved wooden columns and antique furnishings reminiscent of the island's colonial past create a cosy ambience.

Inside the front foyer, a large bamboo covered drinks cabinet is backed by a burnished mirror. Opposite, there is a walk-in wardrobe and dressing room, where a mother of pearl inlay jewellery box sits on an antique dressing table with an adjoining round bamboo framed mirror, while a vintage curved-end rattan bench is tucked underneath. A teak writing desk and dark wood latticed folding screen sit on either side of the bedroom centrepiece, a king-sized bed covered with 300-thread count linens. Glass doors open onto a shaded veranda where an inviting oversized swing daybed overlooks a larger decked viewing point with uninterrupted vistas of the ocean. You can enjoy many luxurious bathing options: an open-air bathroom features a sunken terrazzo soaking tub that flows into a private glass-tiled swimming pool, an outdoor glass encased sauna/steam room/shower is another option, and there's also a secret back garden with an open waterfall shower.

With colonial style married with contemporary twists giving the interiors a fresh feel, this island retreat is a delightfully memorable escape where you can forget everything. ■



Clockwise from top left The 600 sqm Residence boasts two bedrooms and the master enjoys a private balcony. The Ocean House with Pool bedroom opens up to the ocean deck on one side and the glass-tile pool on the other. Hammocks strung between coconut trees on the beach offer great nooks to read or nap. The Residence master bedroom ensuite features a glorious circular shaped free-standing bath overlooking the ocean. The Living Room restaurant is the only dining venue on the private island and provides relaxed all-day service with multiple overstuffed day beds with copious cushions in Maldivian floral and shell prints.