



MALDIVES

4th - 11th September 2017 (7 nights) | \$1,950 per person*

THE EXPEDITION

This 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. The aim of this trip is to use the knowledge of **Manta Trust** experts to find these feeding aggregations and allow the guests to experience the wonder of immersing yourself amongst a feeding frenzy of these gentle giants.

On this expedition we will explore the pristine and rarely visited northern atolls of Baa, Raa and Lhaviyani diving on untouched reefs and looking for poorly studied manta ray populations. A trip designed especially for adventurers looking for something new and rarely offered in the Maldives!



Predicted route around Lhaviyani, Raa & Baa atolls

Baa Atoll is off the main route for the majority of dive liveaboard and we will venture into this more northern atoll specifically to seek out the feeding mantas and hopefully a few whale sharks as well. To see several of the world's largest fish feeding amongst dozens of the world's largest rays is something most people will never forget.

Just north of Baa we will venture into **Raa Atoll**, one of most unexplored atolls of the Maldives regularly visited by mantas and hosting some stunning dive sites. Vertical walls covered in soft corals, gardens of anemones and mantas gliding above our heads are only a few of the marvels of this region.

Before descending back to Malé we will finally visit **Lhaviyani Atoll**, another spectacular northern atoll. Here sharks, schools of eagle rays, tunas and other large pelagic fishes will be the main characters of our dives with the possibility of encountering more manta rays and dive one of the most beautiful shipwrecks of the country.

While the weather in the Maldives at this time of the year is likely to be more changeable, these monsoonal conditions **are exactly what create the planktonic blooms** upon which the mantas and whale sharks aggregate to feed. Furthermore, we can never guarantee these natural events, but we have put together a trip, which maximises our chances of being in the right place at the right time, guided by the expertise of The Manta Trust's Project Leader, Tamaryn Sawers.

CITIZEN SCIENCE - GET INVOLVED!

On this expedition, you'll have the opportunity to experience and participate in cutting-edge 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**.

Every manta sighting is crucial information in developing effective management and conservation strategies for these increasingly vulnerable animals.

MALDIVES

TAM SAWERS (TRIP LEADER)

As far back as Tam can remember she has always had a passion for nature and all things water-bound. Growing up along the Eastern Cape Coast of South Africa,



Tam was lucky to have been exposed to the natural beauties along this untouched coastline. Fulfilling the lifetime ambition to conserve this environment and the wildlife therein, she pursued a BSc Honours degree in Zoology at Rhodes University in South Africa. Setting solid foundations, her university education gave way to fantastic opportunities providing her with first-hand experience as a scientific research assistant aboard the Dr. Fridtjof Nansen, A Norwegian Research Vessel monitoring fish stocks along the West Coast of Africa.

Now equipped with an advanced diving certification and backed by a greater understanding of the devastation that wrack the worlds' oceans internationally, Tam was drawn to York University in the UK where she cemented her education in the field of marine conservation by pursuing a Master's Degree in Marine Environmental Management. This provided her with the opportunity to fulfil a research placement in the Maldives with the Manta Trust in 2014, answering to a childhood dream of one day swimming amongst some of the most exquisite megafauna that grace the worlds' oceans. It is here that she was first acquainted with the majestic manta rays. Her utter amazement and appreciation for these great creatures has led her on a fast track path to pursue a career focussed on the conservation of these endangered species.

Having initially taken up the role of Global Database Manager, Tam now serves as the Project Leader for the Manta Trust's world-leading Maldivian Manta Ray Project (MMRP). In her role, Tam manages the Manta Trust's founding project from a resort island in Baa Atoll, collecting as many ID photographs of manta rays as possible.

Throughout the expedition, Tam will be providing lectures and informal talks on manta ray and whale shark research and conservation. In addition, Tam will conduct general presentations on marine biology, with a focus on the diverse and productive marine ecosystems of the Maldives.



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.

Data Collection: The Manta Trust has a number of research projects worldwide, incorporating population data, research on manta movements, and genetic analyses - to name a few - in order to better understand the general ecology of manta and mobula rays.



THE BOAT | M/Y DUKE OF YORK | CHARM & EXCLUSIVITY

Launched in 2010, the Duke of York motor yacht is a luxurious gateway to experience the magnificent waters of the Maldives. At 36m (118ft), she offers ample interior and exterior areas to relax and unwind. A total of 23 guests can be housed across ten rooms spread over three decks, including a mixture of cabins with single and double beds. All ten en-suite rooms feature their own windows and air conditioning. On the main deck, the salon boasts comfortable lounge seating, ottomans and an entertainment center.

The exterior living space aboard the Duke of York is equally generous. The main aft deck is shaded and boasts teak dining tables and chairs, with wrap-around decks leading to a spacious foredeck, complete with a large oversized seating area / sunpad and cocktails table for socialising in the evenings. The top deck offers partial shade and ample further chaise lounges, also ideal for star gazing by night, for the romantics in the group.

The Duke of York is also accompanied by a comfortable 15m traditional Maldivian *dhoni*, fully equipped for scuba diving excursions and other activities, including canoeing and sunset fishing.

BOOKING

To reserve your place on this Maldives Manta Expedition, please send an email to Conny Paul via expeditions@mantatrust.org.

Payment and booking for this Manta Expedition will be handled by our trip partners, **Luxury Yacht Maldives**. Trip costs for this 7-night expedition includes transfers from Malé, full board and three dives / snorkelling excursions per day.

* Price excludes \$30 USD park fee to be paid locally when entering the Hanifaru Bay Marine Protected Area.

