



7 REASONS TO TAKE A TRIP WITH SCUBASPA

August 31, 2017 • Adventure Travel • Maldives

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I am kneeling on the sand and around me is just darkness and the light of some flickering torches. It is quiet except for the sound of my own breathing. I know I mustn't hold my breath, but it's hard because I am not only surrounded by 20 other divers but also by 20 nurse sharks and a few stingrays. They seem to like us and are just as curious, coming close, sometimes nudging a GoPro, sometimes a leg.



Before I can object I have a stingray sliding against me - he seems to remind me that this is his ocean and I need to make some space for him. I think he is right and take a big inhale to get a bit more buoyant so that he can glide through underneath me.

My heart is beating fast and when Mox, one of our dive guides, signals me an okay I can only beam at him - best dive ever!



I am onboard the [Floating Resort by Scubaspa](#) for a week of diving, my first Maldives live-aboard experience. A live-aboard is basically a dive boat that takes you around to experience some of the best dive sites in a country without having to worry about the logistics or traveling around on your own. After [my first live-aboard in Sipadan](#), I was a bit hesitant to try it again as the boat wasn't the nicest and I was a bit too overwhelmed by the diving conditions as a relatively new diver. However, this time around feels very different, and the week on board the Scubaspa gives me some of the best dives I've ever had and proper post-holiday blues afterward - a novel feeling for a travel blogger who does little else but travel.



Whether you are a diver, want to become one or are just keen on seeing some of the best the Maldives have to offer, here are 7 good reasons to plan a trip with Scubaspa.

1. Experience some of the best dive sites in the Maldives



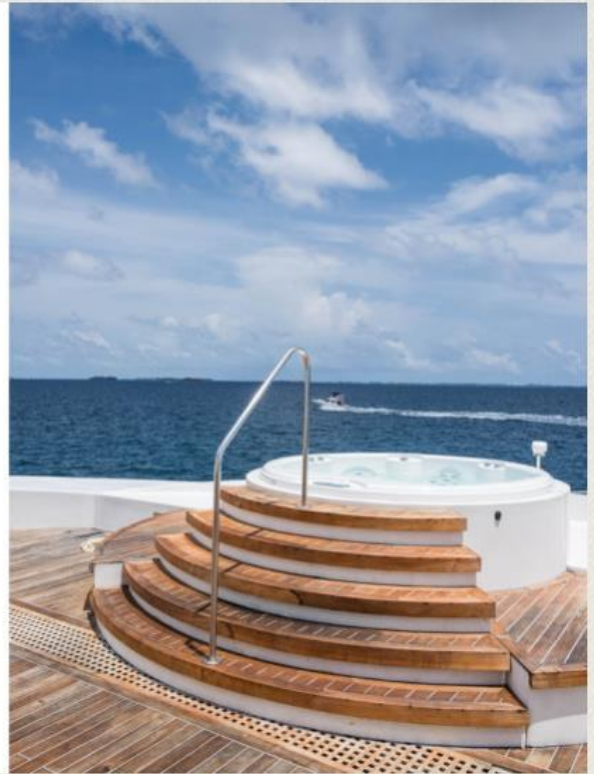
There are great dive sites all over the Maldives, depending on the season, and if you want to hit a few you will be knee deep in logistics for national travel. Getting around in the Maldives usually involves a boat or a plane and is neither easy nor cheap. For divers who usually carry their own equipment in addition to regular luggage, this can get tricky. Especially when you consider the no-fly time after a day of diving, money, and limited holiday time.

There are no issues on a live-aboard. Scubaspa picked me up and dropped off at the airport and I could actually relax or work while we were cruising from one dive site to the next. No more losing holiday time for travel time - and did I mention how nice it felt to actually unpack my suitcase and my dive equipment?



Not only are logistics so much easier but you also have a team of experts that will take you to the best sites according to the season. No itinerary is the same as they really want to show you the best dive sites on any given trip. If you are worried to travel in off-season fear not, in the Maldives off-season means mantas and whale sharks!

2. Travel in Style



While it was all about the diving for me I must admit it was incredibly nice to have a beautiful, spacious cabin to return to. One that came with a proper bathroom, a closet and a panorama window so I had an ocean view from bed.

We also had three amazing meals per day including an egg or crepe station in the morning. My newfound friend Cindy couldn't stop staring at the wine fridge and we got woken up each morning with proper coffee and cappuccinos.





I can certainly do with less but I will say that a bit of luxury was highly appreciated especially when it comes with a jacuzzi on the sundeck instead of the crew's underwear (yes, true story, that has happened before).

3. Spa Time





As the name implies Scubaspa is not just for scuba junkies but also for spa fans. Packages can be booked according to your preference and some will include spa treatments in addition to dives.

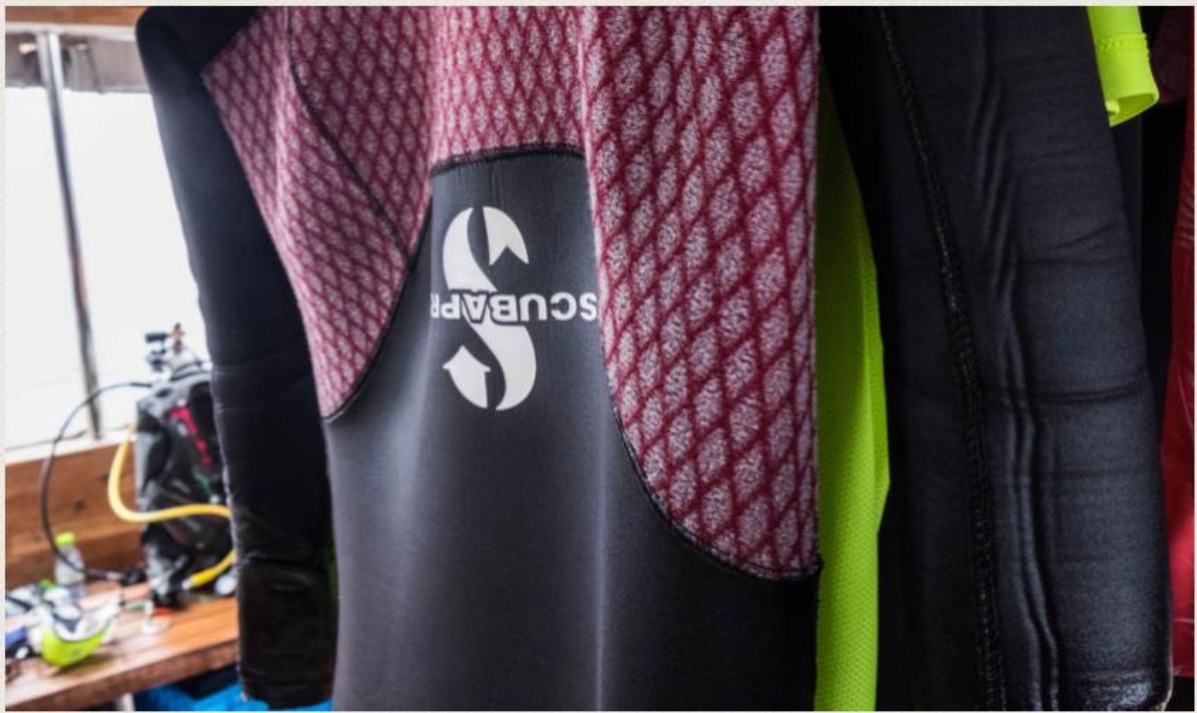
As a newly minted spa fan, I was delighted to try some of their signature treatments as well as a yoga class on the beach.

Yoga classes are offered daily but spa treatments need to be booked in advance (however, they are incredibly flexible if they can accommodate you). That is best done at the beginning of the week before the best slots fill up. Do keep in mind that dive professionals recommend keeping a few hours between diving and a massage.

4. Dive in Style



In addition to having a luxurious boat to travel in style with, our dive dhoni was state of the art as well. Something I appreciated because, to be honest, dive boats can be a little dingy at times. Having well-maintained scuba equipment is not a luxury but a necessity - your life depends on it. At Scubaspa all the rental equipment was in great shape and I knew our own equipment was well-taken care off too. And yes, I will admit after two months as a divemaster trainee it was absolutely glorious not having to wash my own equipment.



At the beginning of the week, we all got assigned into groups according to certifications (OW, AOW, Nitrox divers) and everybody got their own little station on the dhoni where our equipment was set up and kept. For those who are not certified yet or want to take their diving to the next level, Scubaspa offers all kinds of PADI certs. During my week we had a freshly minted Junior Open Water, an Advanced Open Water and several new Nitrox divers.

5. Friends for Life – above & below the surface



...and that brings me straight to the amazing crew of Scubaspa. From our instructors to the cleaning crew, from our barmen Maraj to Captain Nemo (what else can you name a captain?) everybody was not only incredibly good at their respective job but so friendly and fun.

Especially our dive masters and instructors Shumi, Mox, Jah Vid, Pumba, Raymon, and Sparta were absolutely incredible. Not only were they lots of fun to be with but also made sure that everybody from beginner to advanced divers had the best possible experience.



As it goes with any group trips the other people make or break the trip and once again I got very lucky. However, I think in general scuba divers tend to be a friendly bunch and having something like diving in common immediately helps with the bonding. So does being touched by a stingray!

6. All the single ladies



While Scubaspa is first and foremost a live-aboard and you will hear a lot of dive talk all the time, it is not only a great option for divers.

One girl decided on Scubaspa because for her it was a great option to see the Maldives as a solo traveler and not be stuck in a resort surrounded by couples. While she didn't dive she took full advantage of the other offerings like snorkeling, yoga, island excursions and of course the spa treatments.



And as a solo traveler fear not - it is almost impossible not to make friends when you put strangers on one boat for a week. Or even something more than friends...

7. The price is right



After all my raving, let's talk price. While Scubaspa really is one of the top notch live-aboards in the Maldives, the prices compared to a resort stay are very reasonable (check out details for the different cabin prices per season here).

A week not only includes accommodation, three meals per day, excursions and a cocktail night but you also have the choice between different scuba and spa packages. You can either book 15/17 dives including guides, weights, and tank (nitrox is free), 8 spa treatments or a mix thereof. Whatever you decide on, spa treatments as well as additional dives can be booked on top.



Just like anywhere else in the Maldives - alcohol is not cheap so watch your tap. Mind you, prices for drinks here are nothing compared to some of the resorts I stayed at.

And as with any trip or tour you book, do have some money for tips at the end. While the crew has fun too and makes it all look easy, they are also working incredibly hard to make sure that you are having a great time!

Tips for a Liveboard in the Maldives



Nitrox

I just got Nitrox certified before I came to the Maldives and never regretted it one bit. Three dives per day are still hard on my body and diving with nitrox helped with the side effects of the nitrogen such as tiredness. And since diving in the Maldives is limited to 30 m you won't miss out on deep adventures in any case.

Water

This is something Scubaspa makes super easy as they have filtered water available in the cabins and common areas (and are in the stages of introducing it for the dive dhoni as well).

Drinking plenty of water is said to help to avoid DCS and the release of nitrogen which means more safety and more enjoyable dives for you.

Dress Code



The boat has a no shoes policy (something I loved!!) so don't worry about bringing heels or anything fancy. In general, there was no dress code so I stuck to my usual - shorts & t-shirts and some cotton dresses and cover-ups. Remember that the Maldives is a Muslim country so for land excursions to public islands you will need to have knees and shoulders covered.

Do pack at least 3 bikinis and swimsuits so you can change into something dry in-between dives.

Camera



Needless to say, do bring your underwater camera or GoPro. While the visibility isn't the greatest in off-season, I was still happy to take pictures of everything we saw. Our guides were super helpful with taking pictures of us too.

Mind you, sometimes it is good to remember to take the camera down once in a while and just enjoy the dive!

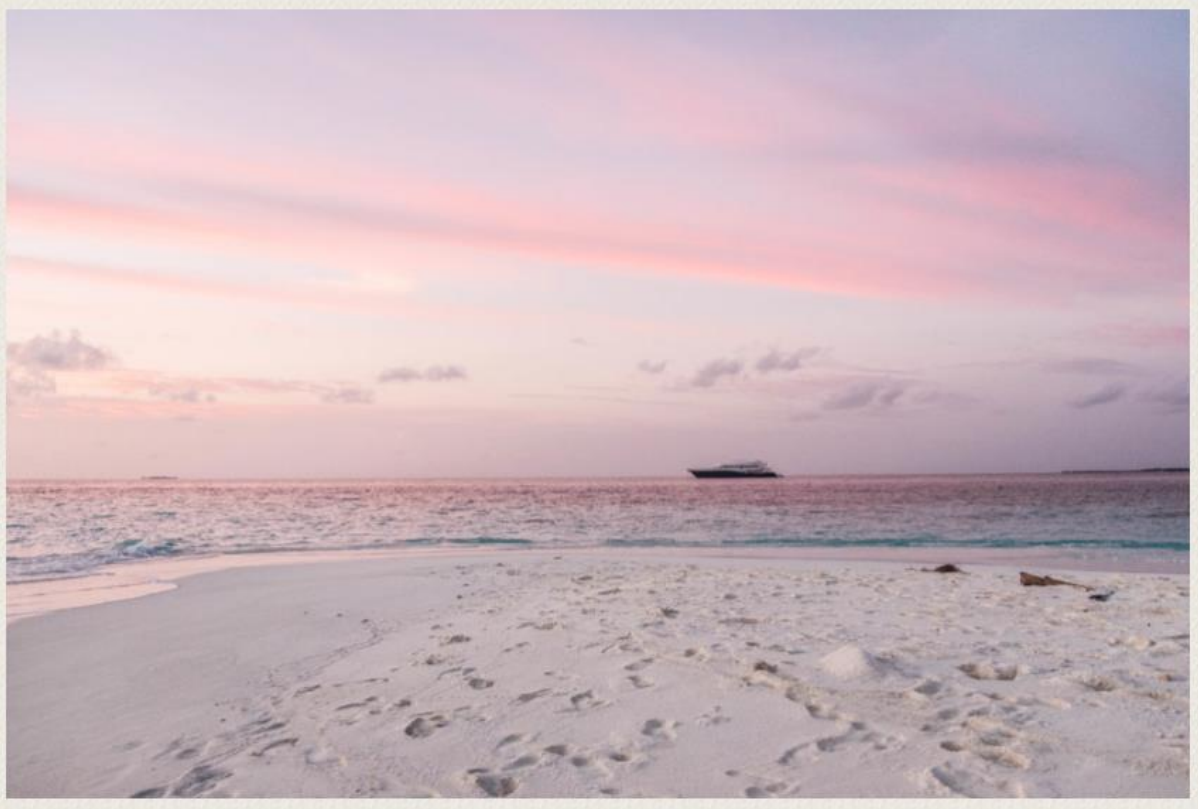
Equipment



I strongly recommend bringing your own equipment. I was super happy to have my own [Scubapro](#) gear with me. Not only is it a matter of [comfort to have your own things](#) but prices for equipment rental are not cheap. Every diver is required to have a computer, a reef hook and an SMB (you will even practice deploying it).

FOMO

I must admit that at some point I developed major FOMO. What if the dive I wanted to sit out was going to be the most amazing dive ever?! Listen to your body and talk to your dive guides - they will tell you honestly which dives will be good and which ones are so amazing you will regret sitting it out.



Thank you, Scubaspa for hosting me on a trip of a lifetime. I honestly haven't had such a great week in a really long time and getting close to all the nurse sharks, mantas and Nemos really took my love for diving to a new level!

Cabin Image by Scubaspa, all other images by Annika & Shumi