

TRAVEL NEWS

The Floating Resort: Scubaspa

By Samantha Coles

Known for an abundance of exotic marine life, the Indian Ocean is a favorite spot for keen scuba divers. The Floating Resort by Scubaspa sails to the top spots in the Maldives, with dive sites meticulously picked based on season so divers get the best of the underwater kingdom — nudibranchs, eels, schools of reef fish, eagle rays, various species of shark, turtles, manta rays and whale sharks.



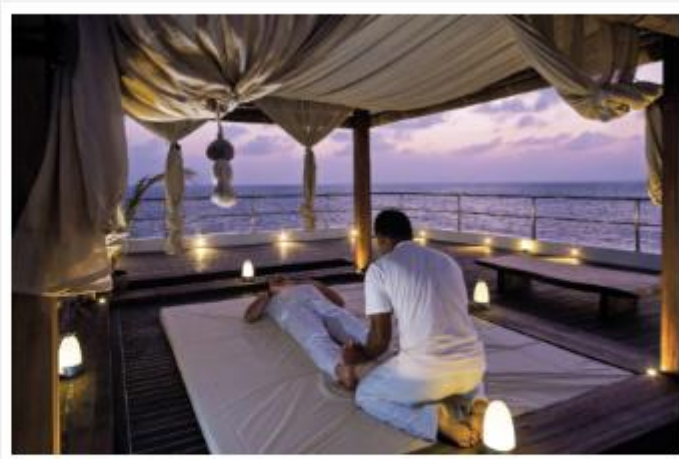
As the only vessel in the Maldives with a 5* PADI rating, divers of all abilities are welcomed, and there's a beginners course available. But, what makes Scubaspa different to other scuba excursions is that the 164 ft yacht caters to non-divers and divers alike. As a non-diver, I stayed aboard with a group of mostly divers, a family with young children, and a few fellow non-divers. The excitement from the divers was evidence enough of the astonishing variety of marine life, and they enthused about the number of dives per day (up to three, plus the opportunity for a renowned night dive) — most were experienced divers yet still impressed by the quality and quantity of the dives.

The dives are split into categories (easy, medium and difficult) and visit the Male Atoll, South Male atoll (visiting Kandooma Thila, considered the best site in the area), North Ari atoll (Fish Head is a big attraction — spot big schools of jacks and fusiliers), South Ari atoll (be sure to see the Kudhima wreck: a 164ft-long cargo ship that lies on the sandy bottom) and the Vaavu atoll (the highlight of the trip for many, Miyarau Kandu has visibility reaching 131 ft during the northeast monsoon).



For non-divers, snorkelling is available if they don't want to miss all the action — during my hour splashing around in open water I spotted nurse sharks plus a whole host of tropical fish and coral.

As the name suggests, Scubaspa also has an on-board spa. Begin your day with sunrise Yoga on the deck, lead by an Indian master, then slope off to the 3,229 sq ft spa. The two upper decks are dedicated spa areas, with six treatment rooms, a secluded deck for open-air massage treatments or meditation and a shaded spa lounge to reflect and relax post-treatment. Treatments include massage, hot bamboo, lava shell, aqua and stone therapies, Ayurveda and beauty treatments based on Asian and Western traditions.



Scubaspa is available for exclusive hire from \$50,000 per week. Visit scubaspa.com
