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Inside Nova Maldives - Why the tiny 5-star paradise is the perfect honeymoon destination

The Maldives has become a top destination for celebrity vow renewals

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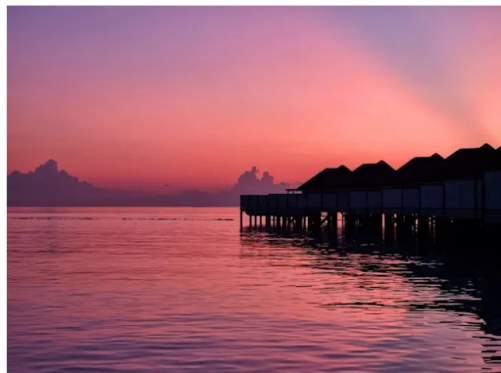


Lily Waddell
PREMIUM CONTENT EDITOR

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The Maldives is the most romantic place on earth. After all, just recently, Princess Diana's niece [Lady Amelia Spencer](#) and her new husband Greg Mallett were the picture of happiness on their Maldives honeymoon after their [HELLO! exclusive wedding in South Africa](#). [Lady Amelia and Greg's honeymoon in the Maldives](#) looked breathtakingly beautiful and I couldn't wait to see this dreamy part of the world for myself after getting engaged.

As well as traditionally a honeymoon hotspot, **the Maldives has become a top destination for vow renewals** in the celebrity world. In recent weeks, TV chef Jamie Oliver and his wife Jools renewed their vows alongside their five children: Poppy, 21, Daisy, 19, Petal, 14, Buddy, 12, and River, six. The gorgeous pictures from their renewal ceremony on the white sands amazed everyone, 23 years after the couple first tied the knot. And in a world exclusive earlier this year, [HELLO!](#) revealed [Peter Crouch and Abbey Clancy renewed their marriage vows in December](#) - with the dazzling Maldives beach photos showcasing the magic of their second big day.



The Maldives is a spectacular place

Taking the plunge, I flew 11 hours to experience the Maldives with my fiancé at the end of the season in April while on the hunt for our perfect honeymoon destination - and I was not disappointed when we arrived in the sun-soaked paradise, [Nova Maldives](#). The silky white sands, surrounding turquoise waters, tropical palm trees, beach huts and the colourful marine life **immediately captured my heart forever...**



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Princess Beatrice's waist-cinching wedding guest dress we saw weeks ago



We were impressed to see baby Blacktip Reef Sharks on arrival

Where to stay at Nova Maldives? The Water Villa

My first impressions of five-star resort Nova Maldives? It was like walking through a waking daydream. I have never been anywhere like it before. Even taking our first dozen steps to Water Villa 206 - which we would call our home for the next four days - was an experience. On arrival, we were impressed to see baby Blacktip Reef Sharks as well as Squid and Needle fish in the azure blue waters below the villas in the few minutes it took to reach our door.

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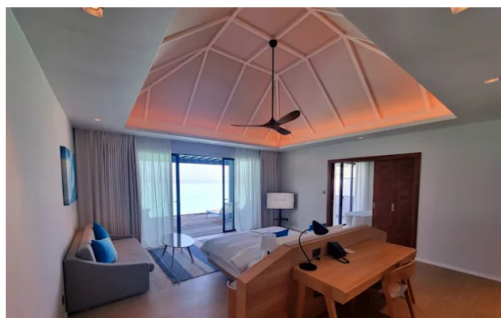
The Water Villas are a fantastic place to stay

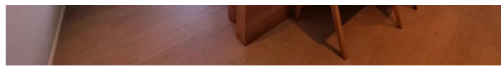
At Nova, it is a tiny slice of paradise with only 76 beach and ocean view villas able to be booked by holidaymakers. It takes about 10-15 minutes to walk around the whole of the resort. Being a small island, however, only adds to the seclusion and its beauty - making it the perfect place for loved-up honeymooners. The Water Villas were gorgeous, floating over the warm waters on stilts with the most idyllic backdrop of the lagoon. A few of the Water Villas on the island have their own private pools while the others boast of Jacuzzis. For me, looking out to the endless beauty of the Indian Ocean from the sundeck - and even the bed - made it **one of the best spots on the resort**. It was stunning, offering the perfect viewpoint for the orange and pinks of sunset to the sparkle of the sun dancing on the water in the heat of the day.



Looking out to the endless beauty of the Indian Ocean made it one of the best spots on the resort

Cooling off in the baking 30 degrees heat was made easy at the Water Villa by taking the steps from the sundeck down to the turquoise lagoon. The shaded spot on the terrace also allowed for a cooler viewing point and the aircon inside the room was always inviting. The floor-to-ceiling windows brought the ocean into the villa with you, even while soaking in the bathtub. The generous-sized bathroom was set back from the terrace to offer privacy, and the toilet was in a separate room, but the bath still had one of the best ocean views. Alternatively, holidaymakers can choose to stay on the land in one of the Beach Villas where you can step out onto the soft white sands of the island.





Inside the spacious Water Villa room at Nova Maldives

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Where to eat at Nova Maldives? Destination dining, overwater restaurant and more

Destination dining

The Destination Dining had the wow factor for me. It was one of the most romantic experiences in the Maldives and a **must-do for honeymooners**. With the stars glittering above, it was a gorgeous set up on the beach for the last night of our stay. It was theatrical, with a huge heart drawn into the sand and fairy lights lighting up the special space. Setting the mood, there was also a giant light up heart that also made a cute frame for photographs. Romance was in the air, there was soft sand beneath our feet and calming calls of the ocean could be heard all around us. The heat of the day had cooled by the evening, making it the perfect temperature to be eating al fresco. We felt like we were the only two people on the Maldives resort as we were sitting alone eating on the beach, with only the occasional crab scuttering past our feet. The waiting staff remained very attentive, even though we were situated away from the main restaurants, and the prosecco was never far away (it was left chilling in an ice bucket just a stone's throw away from the table).



The most romantic meal in the Maldives

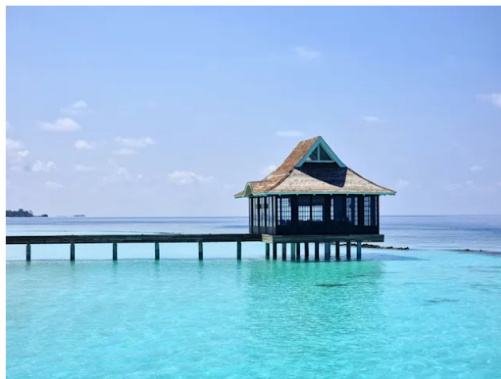
It was a feast for the senses. We chose a mixture of seafood and meat to share, starting with green salads, scallops and sushi. Later, we were served a statement platter made up of mouth-watering lobster, sticky BBQ ribs, tender beef and chicken skewers. Dessert was equally memorable as we somehow found the space to eat the fabulous blueberry cheesecake.

On the way to our Destination Dining, we had spied another set up for a couple dining on the beach the same night as us. It was great to see how they were set up at a different point on the island, making sure both dining experiences fulfilled the romance and intimacy that was promised. The other dining experience looked equally special and unique. A glittering teepee adorned with fairy lights was set up around their table that looked out onto the lagoon and the Water Villas. It was a night to remember.

Mizu

Another show-stopping dining experience on offer at Nova is the Overwater Teppanyaki Restaurant, Mizu, which is situated just over the water. Across a bridge from the sands of Nova, the bright lights give the amazing illusion that the restaurant levitates on the water while walking towards it. This charming place had already made an enchanting impression on me before I had even walked inside. When seated, the ceiling-to-floor windows were opened wide to bring the sounds and sights of the ocean into the restaurant. The sounds of gentle waves always pairs well with prosecco.

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Another show-stopping dining experience on offer at Nova is the Overwater Teppanyaki Restaurant, Mizu

This intimate dining setting felt incredibly personal with the chef cooking dinner, just how you like it, in front of you, which I felt takes a lot of confidence and skill. We enjoyed the farm and the ocean menu, Oishi Shokuji, with great indulgence. The starters went down a treat; we grazed through a selection of sushi, Nigiri and Sashimi, followed by Sautéed Edamame with garlic and carrot-ginger dressing and (if that wasn't enough) Miso soup made of Wakame, Tofu and spring onion.

Then the show really began! The chef cooked up a storm with the Teppanyaki egg and garlic fried rice, cracking the eggs on the spatula and putting on a knife show. It was all performed with a razor sharp sense of humour. The egg fried rice spelt out 'I heart you' with the spring onion, rice and eggs that looked impressive. Main course was a

fabulous show of food: salmon steak, tiger prawns, corn fed chicken, beef steak, shiitake mushrooms and more vegetables.



Chef cooks the egg fried rice to spell out 'I heart you' with the spring onion, rice and eggs

I'm a dessert person but never before has a pudding impressed me so much. The fire show was a vision and a fabulous way to finish the meal. Our fearless chef cooked our dessert while the flames roared in front of us all, flickering and dancing high up in a dazzling show of fire. Our Banana Flambé was then served to us with Pandan Coconut Ice Cream. The verdict? It was totally delicious and an evening of great fun.

More

Although it is a small island, Nova guests have been spoiled for choice with places to eat. Their Flames restaurant, where we tucked into the moreish BBQ and honey ribs before devouring their salted caramel ice cream, had a sizzling vibe with their bamboo torch lights, located on the edge of the beach. Soul Kitchen offered a varied, tasty buffet that we enjoyed at breakfast and lunch. The lunchtime ice cream certainly cooled us down and kept us coming back.

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Paddleboarding at Nova Maldives



The best way to see the island was climbing on a paddle board

The best way to see the island was climbing on a paddle board and paddling out in the lagoon. It was paradise. Seeing the sandy shores, the palm trees and the Water Villas from the paddleboard was an amazing and immersive experience. Having never done paddle boarding before, we had hilarious fun falling into the water but I must admit I began to feel braver after falling in for the first time. At first, it seemed nearly impossible to stand up but after an hour or so of trying, I was pleased I managed to get the hang of it (well, almost!).

Manta Rays experience at Nova Maldives

Snorkelling alongside the Manta Rays was an experience of a lifetime that I will always remember. The gentle giants were spectacular creatures. Their diamond-shape bodies appeared like magnificent capes rippling in the ocean. They moved in time with the rhythm of the waters with such elegance, especially for their size. It is a must for anyone honeymooning in the Maldives.

The Dolphin Sunset Cruise at Nova Maldives

Dozens of playful dolphins swam up close to our boat in an astonishing spectacle to behold. Suddenly, all at once, we were surrounded from every side by dolphins. Swimming in groups, the dolphins made an appearance an hour into our boat trip when the sun kissed the surface of the water.

Relax at the Eskape Spa at Nova Maldives

The experience at the spa left me feeling so relaxed, I almost drifted off to sleep

Taking an hour out of the heat of the day to relax with my fiancé at the spa during our stay was a treat. Greeted with a refreshing drink, I felt ready for the Balinese massage. I enjoyed being able to look through the glass on the floor at the baby Blacktip Reef Sharks and colourful fish swimming beneath me while having the treatment. Unfortunately I was a little sunburnt on my shoulders from the blazing sunshine but the Aloe Vera - which is grown on the island - used at the spa was very soothing. The experience left me feeling so relaxed, I almost drifted off to sleep.

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Were there any downsides to Nova Maldives?

The southern tip of Ari Atoll is renowned for Whale Shark sightings but unfortunately, we were disappointed when we didn't get to see any on our first snorkelling excursion at Nova. We were of course lucky when we saw dolphins and a turtle swimming close to our boat on the same trip. However, a couple at breakfast on a different day were incredibly lucky to see a baby Whale Shark on their trip out. So we had a bit of bad luck there but as expected there can be no guarantee of seeing marine life swimming in their natural habitats.

Nova's best kept secret?



Huge StingRays swim up close

Other than the view from the Water Villa sundeck, I really loved spending time watching the ocean life from the harbours on either side of the island. There was always something different to be seen. At night, we spent time watching from the platform as the huge StingRays swam up close. It was an out of this world experience. Nova's house reef is a mesmerising place to explore, whether you are snorkelling or simply watching from the land.

How to get to Nova Maldives?

Situated in the South Ari Atoll, Nova is only a 25 minute Seaplane ride from Male International Airport. Seaplanes were a wonderful way to see the islands of the Maldives from a bird's eye view, plus they proved to be super speedy. With up to 15 people in a plane, be sure to get a window seat for the best way to see the resorts. From the UK, Male's International Airport is an 11-hour flight away or alternatively holidaymakers can opt to break the journey with a stopover in another country.

How long should you book in the Maldives?

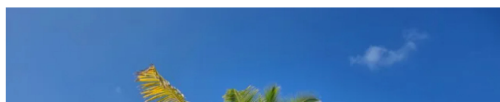


Make time on holiday for watching marine life

Ideally, I would recommend staying in the Maldives for 10 days. My brief dalliance at Nova of three nights and four full days was gorgeous but it also left me wanting more. The 11-hour flight is a long way to travel, so make the most of it. Although it is a small island, Nova has plenty to do but also make time on holiday for watching marine life, wandering along the sand and cooling off in the lagoon.

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Would I go back to Nova Maldives?





I can hear the call of the ocean taking me back to that tiny paradise

In a heartbeat, Nova is the perfect place to book a honeymoon, giving you all the romance and seclusion you desire. I can hear the call of the ocean taking me back to that tiny paradise, Nova Maldives, that will always have a special place in my heart...

In May, rooms at Nova Maldives start at £417 per night on Booking.com.

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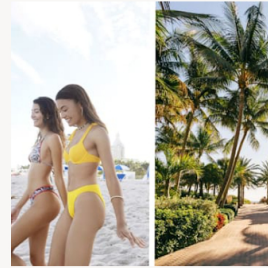
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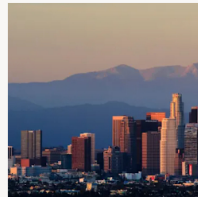
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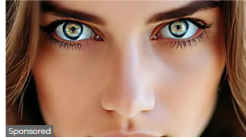
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