

THE  
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# Front runner

From bold colours to classic cuts, a day at the races has never been so stylish



# Touch DOWN

Sale Sharks player Andrei Ostrikov talks rugby, romance and putting down roots

£4.00



# That Loving Feeling

Melissa Porter escapes to her very own island paradise



As an introverted being, I find social events and noisy crowded places among some of my least favourite experiences. Coupled with my values of privacy, luxury and a preference for peace and tranquility to recharge, when an opportunity to travel to the Maldives (purveyor of said riches) was offered to me, I had mentally manifested myself out there already. The Maldives was created by the universe for antisocial, nature-loving beings who appreciate the concept of intelligent luxury.

Travelling to this paradise island in the Indian Ocean is simple enough. For most. From Manchester via London the journey time to Male, the capital, is around 11 hours and an alternative is to travel via Dubai, taking approximately the same time. For some reason, I chose to travel via Hong Kong. I don't recommend this option unless you dislike whomever you're booking the trip for. Over a day later than everyone else who travelled from Manchester, I arrived into Male. From Male, a relatively short transfer trip to your island is organised, which for most, involves either boarding a sea plane or a speed boat. Of course, for me, it involved both modes of transport and it was very, very dark when I arrived. Intelligence: fail. Luxury: tick. I was keen to be inspired by their integration. ➔

➔ On arrival into Soneva Jani, something mystical envelopes your entire being. I liken it to when I meditate and feel energised. As if Barry White is internally serenading me with his loving feeling. The island's ethos is embodied by a philosophy of no news and no shoes, which seems remarkably smart. How so? Consider what the news is reporting, and the direct effect on your well-being: I've never seen a person be euphoric after a viewing of the *News at Ten*. The Soneva brand is all about embodying the simplicity of stillness through the slowness of being and the absolute elimination of unconscious doing. I'm in.

*“On arrival into Soneva Jani, something mystical envelopes your entire being”*

It was created in 1995 by Sonu and Eva to project their vision of intelligent luxury to the more discerning of travellers. It's built around a philosophy of sustainability and, as I toured both their islands of Soneva Fushi (land villas) and Soneva Jani (water villas), I observed their ethos is well established and very much alive. In constructing their newest Soneva Jani resort, Soneva kept its environmental impact as low as possible. The pools use seawater with UV filtration and the villas have been built over the sandy floors of the lagoon, with no damage to any part of the reef. Soneva's Eco Centro Waste-to-Wealth centre ensures that waste is recycled, while the extensive vegetable garden provides local produce for the restaurants, based on organic principles.

Soneva Jani is 5.6 km of lagoon-inspired paradise. The resort is situated on the island of Medhufaru, which is part of an unhabitated five-island cluster. There will be 24 water villas and one island villa, with additional island villas planned for a later stage. Interestingly this is one of the lowest density resorts in the world, so privacy is virtually guaranteed. My spacious villa was one of the most brilliantly designed buildings I had ever seen created from the highest quality sustainable materials. With a sunken internal dining area, a study, superbly appointed kitchen and a gigantic roof deck with unparalleled views across the lagoon (featuring shades of blue I've never witnessed before), private pool with slide and then the pièce de résistance, the bedroom, featuring a retractable roof over the bed so that I could push a button and star-gaze to my heart's content. Did I mention the bathroom with outdoor shower and steps directly into the sea? Heaven.



With average temperatures of around 28 degrees, the island is incredibly pleasant to tour both at night and during the day, and I highly recommend the use of one of their electric golf buggies as you explore seemingly endless stretches of white secluded sandy beaches and lush vegetation featuring banana and coconut trees. We randomly spotted a school of sting ray and a pod of dolphins merrily bobbing just mere metres away from us. Other ways to feel relaxed and peaceful are to experience their world class spa or to kick back at their Cinema Paradiso outdoor venue: a fun concept featuring the first silent cinema in the Maldives. We were all given Bluetooth earphones to watch the movie, so as not to disturb the local wildlife.

The resort serves cuisine from around the world and while I was visiting, Chinese New Year was being celebrated. One of my favourite offerings are the freshly squeezed juices featuring mouthwatering fruits and vegetables grown locally in their organic gardens. Soneva is famous for charcuterie, chocolate, cheese and ice-cream, complimentary to all guests. I suggest their creamy coconut ice-cream. Ice-cream always seems like a smart choice to me. ■  
One-bedroom water retreat, from \$3,832 per night (soneva.com)

### NEED TO KNOW

Soneva made history five years ago by being the first developer to offer foreigners the opportunity to purchase resort real estate at their highly acclaimed Soneva Fushi resort.

Due to its success and the enthusiastic demand from repeat guests, Soneva Jani was launched for would-be owners looking to purchase their own piece of paradise.

Prices start at \$3 million. The villas are sold on a renewable leasehold basis. Owners can opt to put their property in a managed rental programme.