

South Asia

A food-obsessed musician and entrepreneur's guide to the heady Bangladeshi capital; a new range of artisanal perfumes in India; eco-friendly Maldivian luxury

■ MALDIVES

Barefoot bliss

Inside the idyllic archipelago's newest resort, Soneva Jani

Situated on one of the largest lagoons in the Maldives, the brand new Soneva Jani resort has taken all the barefoot luxury from its original nearby sister resort Soneva Fushi and created a tech-savvy overwater paradise for a more modern traveller. After a 35-minute seaplane ride over the iconic Maldivian aquascape, expect arrival on the beautiful azure waters at the southern tip of the Noonu Atoll.

While being a luxury resort, it has amazing eco-credentials, with its own farm growing fresh organic produce for guests and staff, a recycling program and recycled glassware direct from the glass studio at Soneva Fushi. The lagoon is preserved with the aid of a floating airport situated in the deepest part of the 5.6km-long lagoon, where a launch ferries passengers in a

couple of minutes to the main resort, so as not to disturb the fragile ecosystem of the island.

With wooden decking and shingle tiles adorning the vast overwater villas, there is an air of castaway about the resort, but hidden tech lies everywhere. Guests can recline into their bed and retract the roof of the villa to watch the stars above, or head to the observatory for a cocktail on a touchscreen table showing an interactive celestial show. Alternatively, you can simply enjoy the villa's high-definition television and sound system with extensive playlists. Those seeking culinary explorations will be enamoured of the high-tech cuisine designed to trick the tastebuds.

While the resort may be brand new, it still manages to capture the essence of the "no news, no shoes" philosophy that the hotel chain is

famous for. Guests are still provided with bicycles to navigate the vast overwater development, and even take them to the adjoining island, where they will be treated to a cinema under the stars.

The resort also features the largest overwater structure in the Maldives. At three storeys tall, The Gathering acts as a central point for guests, and houses a spa, library, restaurant, kids' club, wine cellar and the signature So Cool room offering complimentary ice cream, chocolate and deli goods. Although, with overwater hideaway villas starting at 410sqm – each featuring a 13m private pool, walk-in mini bar, uninterrupted lagoon views with direct access through a water slide, and a personal butler – it may be that guests will never want to leave the comfort of their own personal paradise. soneva.com/soneva-jani

