

baby&me

a magazine for childhood

JUNE 2014
£3.95

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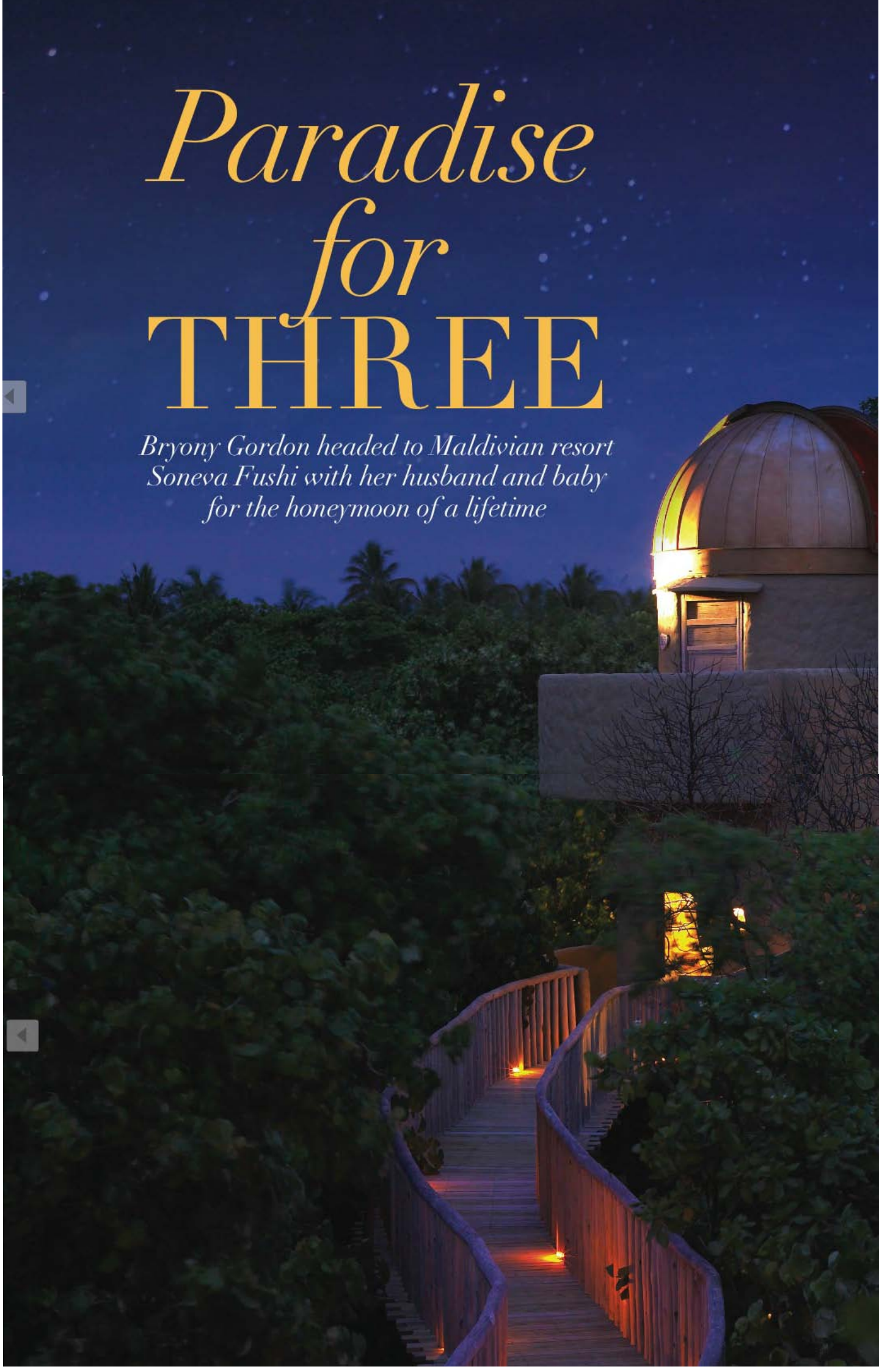
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Paradise for THREE

*Bryony Gordon headed to Maldivian resort
Soneva Fushi with her husband and baby
for the honeymoon of a lifetime*





Who takes their baby to the Maldives?" protested a friend, when I told her of our plans to spend 10 days on an island in the Indian Ocean with our 11-month-old daughter. Who takes their baby to the Maldives, indeed. It's a place for honeymooners and loved-up couples, not knackered new parents who spend their time arguing about the best way to sterilise bottles.

I had been to the Maldives once before, on a press trip when I was single, and it had been so instantly relaxing, so amazingly romantic, with all the white sandy beaches and turquoise waters and all the other clichés, that I had vowed to come back the moment I got a proper boyfriend. But life deals you curveballs and, by the time I got a proper boyfriend, I had also got pregnant, and then we were caught up in the whole hassle of having a baby, and getting married, and by the time we had a moment to go to the Maldives for our belated honeymoon, we had a nearly-one-year-old daughter, and there was no question of us leaving her at home.

So that's who takes a baby to the Maldives, I explained to my friend.

But on the flight out, I did wonder who took a baby to the Maldives. The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge were on our plane, and they'd left Prince George at home. Meanwhile, back in cattle, we were dealing with a screaming, squirming child. What had we done, I wondered? Was this going to be the holiday from hell? What if our red-haired, fair-skinned child hated the sun? Was this the worst holiday choice ever?

We needn't have worried.

We were going to Soneva Fushi, one of the few island resorts in the Maldives that welcomes children with open arms, so much so that they are about to open the Den, a giant children's centre in the jungle that has been designed by kids themselves (architects came up with the plans with the help of the resort's young guests). There will be a pirate ship, a zip line, a large games area,





while eating tomato pasta under the stars. The food was an undoubted highlight – everything could be pureed and there was a waiter wielding a bib behind every corner. She drank watermelon juice and tried curries – if her diet pre-Maldives consisted largely of Ella's Kitchen, now she will eat just about anything. Mum and Dad were able to gorge, too – at Soneva Fushi there is a chocolate room, and a cheese one too – and on the nights we fancied a drink at the over-water bar, there was an army of childminders to call on. As a first stamp on a passport, it was pretty damn perfect. Who takes their baby to the Maldives? Anyone who wants to marvel at dolphins and devour delicious curries with their daughter, that's who.

** Stay 7 nights pay for 5 plus receive complimentary half board. ITC Luxury Travel (01244 355 527; itcluxurytravel.co.uk) has prices from £2,789 per person based on 2 adults sharing a Crusoe Villa for 7 nights on a half board basis including return economy class flights with British Airways from London Gatwick and transfers. Saving up to £1,525 per person. Valid for travel completed between 12 May -31 July and 1 Sep-19 Oct 2014*

and a 14-metre tunnel for kids to clamber through. There will be a dance area, a dressing-up room, a cinema and a DJ corner, and a 130-sq-metre pool complete with slide and shallow area for toddlers. The resort doesn't currently have a communal pool, so we made sure we had a villa with one, which came with all the toys a child could want from a holiday – bucket and spade, watering can, various other bits of brightly-coloured plastic for her to play with. We had remembered her armbands, but if we hadn't, our Mr Friday (every guest has one) reassured us that there were plenty available to be loaned. Ditto buggies. We had brought our Bugaboo Bee with us – is there a better buggy for airports? – but they also provided us with a sand buggy should we fancy a stroll along the beach. Anything we wanted – a fridge for my make-up, some bottles for the baby, a menu of pillows to choose from – our Mr Friday was more than happy to sort out.

Everyone at Soneva Fushi is given a bicycle to ride around the island on, and I was given a tricycle, in which my daughter sat squealing

and pointing at the passing wild rabbits and chickens. Our bathroom was open-aired which made us feel like the Swiss Family Robinson, and we had a tub big enough for all three of us. There was a spa that did baby massage – that night, our jetlagged daughter slept a whole 12 hours. And when it rained one day, the iPod hooked up to the TV – ready loaded with an assortment of family films – made sure we could keep her entertained, while the current kid's club had a library of books and toys to delve into too. One night we even got to sample the beach cinema, where she cackled at *Despicable Me 2*



Watersports in the turquoise sea. Left: the newly designed children's Den. Above: open-air cinema screenings. Above left: al fresco dining