



TO A SECRET HAVEN AND BACK

THE MALDIVIAN DRIFT

By **SHAFRAZ NAEEM**, SSI INSTRUCTOR-TRAINER

Now this is where the fun begins. Turning up the speed, diving in the Maldives has never been quite like this. If there's anywhere you need to hang in there, chill and drift, this would be the place, and there's no one else you would probably like to experience heaven with than a true Maldivian who has been there and done that a thousand times over.



GETTING TO RASDHOO

YOU CAN GET TO RASDHOO EITHER BY SPEEDBOAT OR GOVERNMENT FERRY. IT'S A 1 HOUR 15 MINUTE RIDE FROM THE CAPITAL, MALÉ, TO RASDHOO BY SPEEDBOAT. ON THE GOVERNMENT FERRY, IT TAKES 3 TO 4 HOURS.

DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY: **> 5**

(for experienced Open Water divers with excellent buoyancy control skills and a passion for strong currents)

DIVE PROFILE:

Depth 14–30m+, Dive time 45 mins to 1 hr

CURRENT VELOCITY:

4–5 knots

LOCATION:

Rasdhoo Madivaru Channel (2-min boat ride from Rasdhoo), Maldives

GEAR:

- Aqua Lung Legend regulators
- Hollis SMS 50 sidemount BCD
- Aqua Lung Micro mask
- Scubapro Jet fins



Shafraz Naeem

ONE OF THE BEST CURRENT DIVES IN A CHANNEL IS THE RASDHOO MADIVARU CHANNEL.



STAYING IN RASDHOO

THERE ARE VERY GOOD, AFFORDABLE AND COMFORTABLE GUESTHOUSES ON THE ISLAND. ALL GUESTHOUSES HAVE WI-FI, HOT AND COLD WATER IN THE SHOWERS, AND IN-HOUSE DINING. SOME POPULAR GUESTHOUSES INCLUDE RASDHOO ISLAND INN, BANANA RESIDENCE, RAS VILLAGE, RETREAT RASDHOO, PALM VILLAGE, AND CRYSTALLINE.



DIVING IN RASDHOO

DIVING IS OFFERED BY ATOLL SCUBA, ONE OF THE MOST CHILLED-OUT DIVE CENTRES IN THE MALDIVES. IT FOCUSES ON DELIVERING A HIGH-QUALITY, FUN AND SAFE DIVING EXPERIENCE.

WWW.ATOLLSCUBA.COM

RASDHOO Atoll is one of the smaller atolls that make up the Maldives. There are three main channels, four islands and a number of submerged reefs inside the atoll. Teeming with marine life, this place can keep even the most experienced and well-travelled diver spellbound.

The atoll is famous for its schools of scalloped hammerheads, as well as a variety of marine life large and small. But it is the big stuff that is most sought after by divers who come for a visit in search of paradise.

One of the best current dives in a channel is the Rasdhoo Madivaru Channel. I've done countless dives here

LEFT PAGE Another exciting plunge from the *dhoni*.

RIGHT PAGE Hooked on and enjoying in the currents!

but I'm always excited to dive this site every time I return. In fact, the marine life is so abundant here, and the diving so compelling, that some of the divers who come to dive with me do three to four dives just at this one site every single day!

The currents can be strong here, and when they're really ripping, it's the best time to dive, as it is full of surprises. There is a narrow "bridge" at the edge of the channel that leads down to a bigger coral pinnacle – that is where all the action is.

One of the best dives I have ever done there took my breath away. Hanging in the current close to the dive



SWEPT AWAY:
CURRENT DIVING IN
REMOTE LOCATIONS
 DIVE DOCTOR STEVE
 MUSCAT RECENTLY
 DIAGNOSED THREE
 CASES OF IMMERSION
 PULMONARY OEDEMA.
 THIS CONDITION MAY
 DEVELOP DURING
 HIGH-STRESS DIVES IN
 COLD WATER. IF A DIVER
 STARTS COUGHING
 UNDERWATER, FEELING
 OUT OF BREATH, OR
 FEELING WATER IN
 THEIR LUNGS, THEY
 SHOULD IMMEDIATELY
 BE TAKEN OUT OF THE
 WATER AND GIVEN O₂.
 IF NOT, THE CONDITION
 MAY PROGRESS RAPIDLY
 AND RESULT IN A
 FATALITY. THESE SIMPLE
 MEASURES ARE USUALLY
 ENOUGH TO MITIGATE
 THE CONDITION, EVEN IF
 A HOSPITAL IS FAR AWAY.



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BIG NO-NO:
SIMON SAYS...
 BEWARE OF GOING
 INTO DECO ON DIVES
 IN STRONG CURRENTS
 – MANY DRIFT DIVES
 END WITH BLUE WATER
 ASCENTS. IT MAY BE
 HARD TO MAINTAIN
 DECO STOP DEPTH FOR
 LONG IN A SITUATION
 WHERE YOU HAVE
 NO VISUAL DEPTH
 REFERENCE LIKE A
 SHALLOW REEF OR REEF
 WALL; IT REQUIRES A
 LOT OF TRAINING AND
 PRACTICE IN DEPLOYING
 AND MANAGING A DSMB.



BIG NO-NO:
SHAFRAZ SAYS...
 GO FOR IT AND DEPLOY
 THE DSMB! SINCE
 ALMOST ALL THE DIVES
 IN THE MALDIVES
 ARE CURRENT DIVES,
 DECO STOP IS DONE
 DRIFTING ALONG THE
 REEF OR THROUGH THE
 CHANNEL. NOTE: DIVES
 ARE ALWAYS PLANNED
 AND ADHERED TO.

**AFTER HANGING ON IN THE CURRENT, WE LET GO
 AND FLEW THROUGH THE CHANNEL... IT WAS JUST
 AMAZING TO ZOOM BY ALL THESE AND WATCH THE
 MARINE LIFE WHIZZ PAST.**

ABOVE A leopard shark surprises a group of divers.

BELOW A diver drifting by a school of blue striped snappers on one of the long wall dives.

group, there were over 25 massive grey reef sharks, plus schools of eagle rays, silvertip sharks, whitetip reef sharks, a vortex of bigeye trevallies, schools of barracudas, snappers and stingrays. But best of all was the gathering of great hammerheads.

After hanging on in the current, we let go and flew through the channel. The inside of the channel has small *thilas* (submerged reefs), and it was just amazing to zoom by all these and watch the marine life whizz past. Once, we nearly ran headlong into three manta rays while we were zipping through at super speed!

We did our safety stop while drifting and got picked up by our *dhoni* a few kilometres inside the atoll. What a ride! **AD**



Shafraz Naeem

Shafraz Naeem, known to everyone as “Shaff”, is an ex-military dive instructor, an award-winning underwater photographer and an SSI Instructor-Trainer who started his diving career in 1994. He has extensive knowledge of diving all over the Maldives.

