

# TravelTrendz

International

November / December 2021

*a travel lifestyle publication*

**Azerbaijan**  
Winter Experiences

**Pakistan**  
Kailash Festivals

**Uganda**  
Uncovered

**Maldives**  
Sunny Side Of Life



ISSN 1752-6256



Image : Kudadoo Seaplane



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**Published by**  
Al jasar Advertising Ltd.  
United Kingdom  
Unit G OYO, Business Park,  
Hindmans Way, Dagenham,  
Essex RM9 6LN, London  
Tel : +44 208 526 7779,  
**Distributed in UK & Europe**  
PostScriptum  
Distribution & Marketing Service  
London, UK

The pandemic is still there however, vaccination is helping. Even though the entire industry is in trouble and travelling has not reached the pre-Covid levels with travel restriction but many destinations are opening up borders for vaccinated people. The vaccines are being used as the major tool but still huge global population is not vaccinated. The industry is still facing a mighty challenge. Individual countries are looking for ways and means to kick start the economies but the travel and tourism is the key to revival and with easing of travel restrictions, innovative ways and means are being sought to revive the economy.

In this issue as always, we offer new and exciting options to our readers as destinations are gradually opening. The top destinations and Hotels are being introduced as never before. Do miss the article on Vienna, Austria. Learn more about the amazing Kailash Festival in Pakistan. We have featured the amazing wellness destination Thailand in this issue. Do not miss the articles about Japan and Maldives. Article on winter in Azerbaijan is a must read. An interesting interview with the top brass managing the tourism of Uganda is not to be missed plus the feature about the Big seven in Uganda gives a good insight about the wildlife in the country.

We have covered the top notch hotels and Resorts in this issue such as The Mysk Kingfisher in Sharjah, UAE. We have a special section on the amazing properties in Maldives such as Kagi Maldives Spa Island, Horawalhi Maldives, The Westin Maldives Miriandhoo Resort and the upcoming properties under COLOURS OF OBLU brand.

As always, read about the news and views relating to the hospitality industry plus learn about what is happening in the Airlines and Aviation Industry.

So, have a good time reading...

**Ken Chapman**  
Editor

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**2022**



# AZERBAIJAN

## GATEWAY FOR NEW, UNEXPLORED, AMAZING WINTER EXPERIENCES



Combining the charms of both Europe and Asia, Azerbaijan is a country of surprising contrasts, hospitable people and epic landscapes. From historic and traditional experiences to modern-day escapades, this fast-growing destination offers countless experiences all leading to untold tales and adventures. And no matter which experience you opt for, expect spectacular architecture, rare natural wonders and exquisite food and wine.

Home to 9 out of 11 distinct climatic zones, the landscape offers diverse scenery with everything from city to beaches, forests, and lush and snowy mountains. In fact, the mountains of Azerbaijan are transformed into a white paradise every winter, offering a magical experience for both those seeking adventure and those looking for a dose of rest and relaxation. Set amidst the Caucasian mountains, the change of scenery with the most satisfying pistes for ski enthusiasts is just three hours away from the city centre.

In winter, Azerbaijan's mountains are irresistible for skiing enthusiasts. Breathtakingly beautiful, they are home to state-of-the-art ski resorts with well-prepared slopes and first-class amenities. The dramatic landscapes make ski trips here unforgettable, while non-skiers can opt for numerous other activities such as riding a snowmobile, ziplining or snow tubing.





Perched atop the pristine mountains of the Gusar region, Shahdag Mountain Resort has a range of high-class hotels, open-air steam pools, spas, restaurants, and an endless array of thrilling sports and leisure activities. The snow at Shahdag transforms it into one of the most stunning ski resorts in the Caucasus. Whether you are a beginner or an experienced skier, brave the slopes and enjoy over 17 kilometres of pistes. The nearby charming village of Laza is famous for its storied waterfalls which freeze into icefalls during the winter and become a popular site for ice climbing. Soon-to-be-opened rollercoaster in Shahdag will definitely become a go-to place for the enthusiasts of extreme activities.

Further along the Caucasus Mountain chain, the scenery at Tufandag Mountain Resort in Gabala is equally enchanting. The complex, which can accommodate up to 3,000 people at a time, is well equipped with restaurants, cafes, bars and recreation areas, as well as a ski school for children and adults. The 15 kilometres of perfectly groomed slopes are great for snowboarding and skiing.

Like Shahdag, it also has several affordably luxurious hotels. The Chalet Steak and Wine House, which can only be reached by cable car, is the highest restaurant in Azerbaijan, to enjoy a perfectly cooked steak alongside a glass of local wine.

The village of Agbulag in the Shahbuz region, an hour's drive from Nakhchivan city, is home to the first all-round tourism infrastructure complex in Nakhchivan. This area has long been popular for agricultural tourism and relaxation in nature, attracting tourists with its pure air and clear weather. But the ski centre ensures there are now great travel opportunities throughout the year. At the centre you can not only go skiing, snowboarding or sledging, but also enjoy the Lesser Caucasus Mountains scenery and try delicious local dishes. It has everything necessary to cater to tourists, including a hotel with 38 rooms.

With mountains accounting for over 60 per cent of Azerbaijan's total area, visitors can enjoy memorable moments hiking through the



stunning landscape. One such village is Khinalig which is beautiful and peacefully isolated, so much so that its residents speak a little-known, unwritten language. The scenic route to Khinalig from the city of Guba opens to impressive views at every turn. But the photo opportunities do not stop there! Recently included in the UNESCO World Heritage Tentative list, the village is made up of 360 cobblestone houses built on top of one another 200-300 years ago: one house's roof is another family's courtyard! The settlement's 2,000 residents are warm, welcoming and eager to share with you their local dishes and homebrewed tea. To see all the village's best

bits, reserve up to five hours of your day. Griz village is another popular destination in Guba region, located 2200 meters above the sea level. It is famous for its fascinating waterfall located up in the hills of Ag Dagh mountains. The waterfall freezes in winter and creates a breathtaking scenery, making it a perfect spot for nature admirers. In the region of Gakh, Ilisu village is also picturesque from every viewpoint and has paths to spectacular waterfalls and historical monuments.

# Great reasons to visit JAPAN

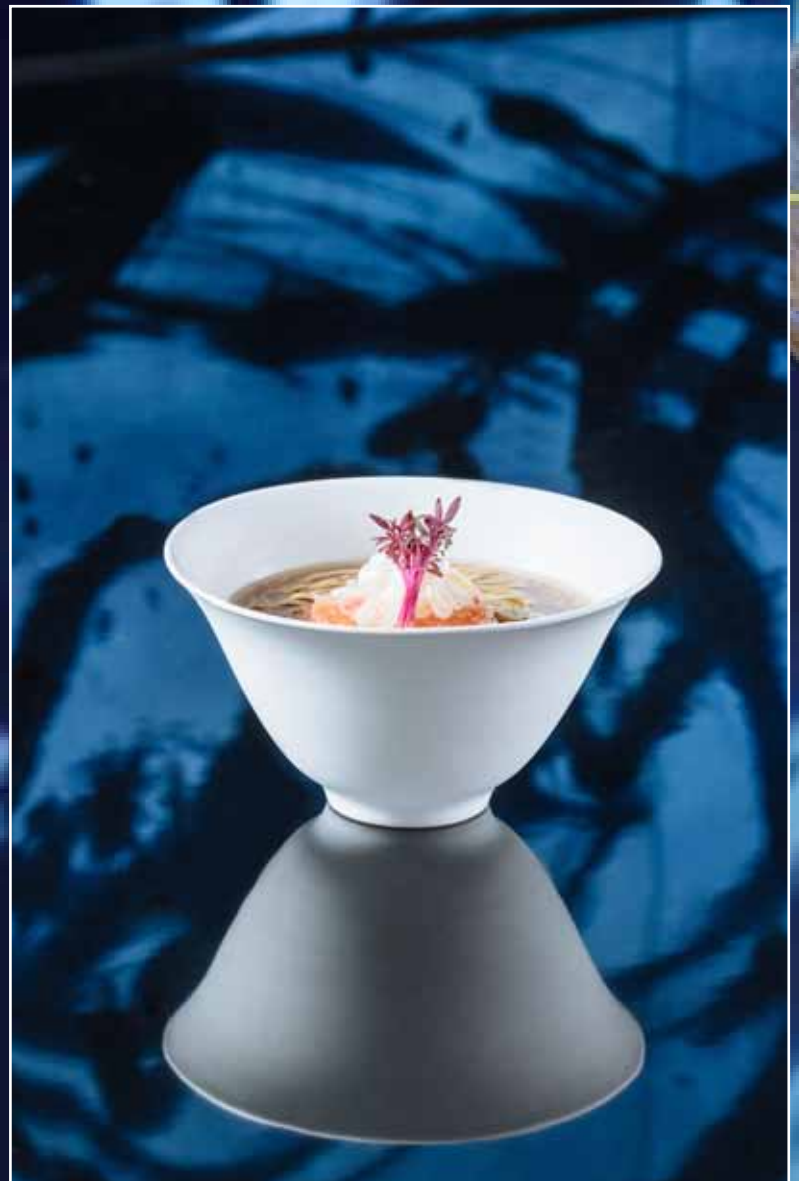
## Vegan Ramen with a Side of Mesmerising Art

There are plenty of great reasons to visit Japan, but eating and drinking is usually high on the agenda of any visitor to the country. Japan is home to more than 450,000 restaurants, and the capital, Tokyo, has the highest number of Michelin-starred restaurants in the world. From fine dining to casual and from traditional to street food, it's no wonder that Japan has become known as one of the world's top gourmet destinations. And with the country taking great strides into vegetarian, vegan and halal options, it's a place where everyone can enjoy a great food experience.

Newly opened this October is Vegan Ramen UZU Tokyo, an outpost of the popular Kyoto restaurant, located within teamLab Planets. Opened in Tokyo's Toyosu district in 2018, teamLab Planets has become enormously popular with both locals and visitors for its mesmerising immersive exhibitions that invite you to become one with the art, whether it's digital, water- or flower-based, or reflected in infinity mirrors. You don't have to be visiting teamLab Planets to try the ramen, but it's an exceptional place, so why not combine both and make a day of it?

The vegan ramen isn't only popular for its flavours. It's also worthy of being considered art itself. Plant-lovers should go for the highly photogenic Flower Vegan Ramen, inspired by teamLab Planet's Floating Flower Garden installation and featuring a perfectly balanced cold soup with delightfully chewy noodles and a colourful display of edible flowers on top.

Or opt for the rich, warming flavours of Vegan Spicy Miso Ramen with thick noodles that are the perfect vehicle for the tasty broth. Follow it with a scoop of white ginger lily or pink rhubarb ice cream – vegan, of course – and you have the makings of a perfect lunch, enjoyed in the unmatched surroundings of two of teamLab Planet's popular art installations, Reversible Rotation - Non-Objective Space, and the Table of Sky and Fire. It's hard to know which to focus on most – the food or the art – but you're guaranteed a meal like no other.







# Kingly Kingdom of **Mysk** Kingfisher

by: Fouzia Sohail



This eco-friendly retreat at Sharjah's Khor Kalba is a milestone in UAE's national protected area development. With not only detailed educational and recreational activities but also the novel chance to experience the exquisite 300-year-old Mangrove Centre. The Mysk Retreat is one of the few nature friendly havens by the Sharjah Collection of Desert Retreats/Hotels.

The serenity and splendour of the Arabian shore and desert line is further enhanced through the tent room hospitality, a private plunge pool and the privilege to peregrinate on the delicate eco landscape. Special designated pathways enable the visitor to learn about the prominence of the mangrove forest features and how it enables to be a major part of the global fight against climate change.

Not only does the Mysk encourage both children and adults to enjoy, learn, and respect their environment but it is an astounding sanctuary to view the animal/ birds and marine life activities. Along with specific shrubs and trees that make their mark and regard felt for the safekeeping efforts put into this conservational and cultural treat from Sharjah.

Be assured that the plethora of activities ie kayaking, bird watching, archery, star gazing, crab watching, shell collection, gazelle feeding, organic farm growth, insect/ fish habitat informational resources, workshops, outdoor classrooms, turtle pools, and complimentary bike riding and buggies will keep you entertained.

The Al Qarm restaurant and lounge offer various menus as a buffet, a la carte and bbq. Special bookings offer a butler/mourafiq at hand to expedite any queries and even set up a bbq or a bonfire for you. Spa services are also provided in vigilance with Covid protocols. Air transportation to the resort can be provided upon request while the boat ride to the retreat is free of charge.

No cars are allowed on this green ecologically sound property to comply with the government's conservationist values and goals.

Relish, relax, revel and return to the Retreat @ Mysk Khor Kalba.



# Uganda Uncovered



by: Hazel Saldanha

Uganda, situated in East-Africa is a country that is all in. One does not find half measures or trivial feats – instead it is brimming with powerful attractions, enchanting natural beauty, exhilarating adventure sports, the world’s premier wildlife havens all backed by a cool moderate climate year round. At a recent travel roadshow organized by the country’s tourism board, Trendz International sat down with Mr. Eddy Kirya (Board Director) and Ms. Lilly Ajarova (CEO) to discover why Uganda is the “Pearl of Africa.”

Starting at the top – the Rwenzori mountain range some of East Africa’s tallest mountains lie within a few kilometers of the equator showcasing a contrast not seen anywhere on earth. Year-round snow-covered peaks and glaciers with an alpine ecosystem rife with waterfalls and lakes capture the majestic beauty and source of the River Nile. The colloquially named “Mountains of the Moon” offer up a landscape touted “Africa’s Botanical Big Game” with giant lobelias and flora densely lighting up the horizon.

The country is a dream destination for those in search of the ultimate wildlife experience – boasting ample avenues to track the Big 7 of East Africa – the lion, African Lion, Leopard, Elephant, Rhinoceros, Cape Buffalo, Mountain Gorilla and Wild Chimpanzee. These majestic creatures roam in abundant numbers over 10 wildlife havens. A unique element to the typical wildlife safari includes expert tracking of the last few hundred mountain gorillas that call the Forest of Bwindi their home. This once in a lifetime experience allows an up and close encounter with these majestic primates whilst serving as a solemn reminder of



Mr. Eddy Kirya  
Board Director



our responsibilities as human guardians of the natural world. In addition to mammals though, the destination is much sought after by birders as it boasts over a thousand species amongst its habits and is home to over half of Africa's bird population. Uganda surpasses other safari destinations in these two areas, but, in addition, it remains a fabulous destination for traditional safari by vehicle or by boat, thanks to its plush assortment of habitats.

The nation is not only brimming with nature and wildlife but also a fascinating cultural heritage spanning thousands of years. Explore the capital city of Kampala with its enthralling shrines, tombs, cathedrals and temples or learn more about the four main kingdoms and nearly 54 tribes that peacefully coexist in an aura of inclusivity and harmony. Adrenaline junkies will be pleased to know that the city of Jinja a short trip away from the capital Kampala is touted the Adventure Capital of East Africa, where one can enjoy heart pumping, grade 5 white water rafting along the sources of the Nile or bungee jump into the magical river. Further afield, the Mabira Forest Zip Line system sends guests soaring between the tallest trees in the rainforest. A vast network of zip lines stretches along the tree tops for an amazing view of indigenous birds, primates, eagles and natural waterfalls.

Discover yourself as you uncover an incredibly harmonious, sustainable and vibrant country– a fairy-tale in the making. Over twenty airlines operate between the UAE and Uganda with several direct flights covering the journey in just over five hours.

Learn more at [www.visituganda.com](http://www.visituganda.com)



Ms. Lilly Ajarova  
CEO



# Uganda's Unbeatable Wildlife

## The Big 7

by: Hazel Saldanha

Artly termed the "The Pearl of Africa" Uganda is blessed with incredible natural beauty, brimming with thickly forested lands, vast expanses of savannahs and misty mountains that will satiate even the most discerning wildlife enthusiast, all whilst ensuring that every experience is framed from the ground up to minimize our human impact to ensure that generations to come fully enjoy the richness of its flora and fauna.

The "Big 5" a term coined in an age-old era indicated the 5 most challenging animals to track which were the African Lion, Leopard, Elephant, Rhinoceros and Cape buffalo. With the advent of modern transportation and experienced guides visitors are nearly guaranteed to spot the Big -5 in many of the country's 10 National Parks – the Queen Elizabeth Park amongst the most diverse of them all. The park's allure is drawn from its mix of habitats and eco-niches; the sight of majestic rare tree-climbing lions in the middle of a hunt is sharply contrasted with large buffalo and elephant herds that dominate the horizon. A number of options await visitors from walking safari's to a channel cruise along the game rich Kizanga river channel or a multi-night stay at one of the many riverside lodges that allow for sunset encounters with the majestic procession of wildlife that skirts its banks. Although Queen Elizabeth park is a fantastic primer for the new wildlife enthusiasts; far more awaits those who wish to experience the awe inspiring mountain gorilla and the wild chimpanzee – completing the "Big 7"

Uganda is home to almost half the world's surviving mountain gorillas; the Bwindi Impenetrable national parks – a UNESCO

world heritage site is where nearly 350 of the world's remaining 1100 gorillas live, amongst precipitous mountainous rainforests. Tracking gorillas is a truly challenging yet rewarding experience as these creatures live in dense undergrowth. Seasoned guides lead visitors up verges, across flowing rivers past thorny trees and vines in order to catch a glimpse of these creatures. In addition to these primates the park also hosts forest elephants, giant hogs and over 350 species of bird, including several seen nowhere else in the world which makes it a bird-watcher's dream come true.

North of Bwindi, Kibale National Park is believed to have the highest primate densities in Africa and the foremost destination to view wild chimpanzees – including the ultra-rare L'Hoest monkeys and the endangered red Colobus species. The park is a sensory feast with an amazing varied landscape, where grassland and swamps are interspersed with elevated plateaus. Incredibly it is said there are several groups of wild chimpanzees that are habituated to human contact for an intimate experience like no other. No visit is complete without a trip to yet another UNESCO heritage site the Rwenzori National Park a short trip east of Kibale. It is a haven for a number of rare plants, animals and birds some of which are still being discovered. The Rwenzori Mountains are a marvel in themselves with equatorial snow covered peaks along with lowlands blanketed in colourful mosses united with spectacular flora creating an idyllic dreamy ambience.

Learn more about Uganda's fantastic wildlife experience at [www.ugandawildlife.org](http://www.ugandawildlife.org)





# Feeling Vienna

Vienna is a capital of pleasure – just as diverse as the city itself are the possibilities for enjoying it to the fullest and with all the senses. After the privations of recent months, there is a great desire to indulge oneself again, to exploit everything to the fullest, and to break away from the monotony of everyday life.



## HOW DOES VIENNA TASTE?

On the one hand, there are the culinary delights of Vienna that carry our palate through the city. From beisl to toque-winning restaurant, from hipster café to traditional coffee house and from street food to slow food. Viennese cuisine is the only type of cooking in the world to be named after a city. Many specialties have conquered the world, such as the Wiener schnitzel with the crispy, golden-yellow breadcrumbs in a cozy beisl or the aromatic apple strudel in the coffee house, whose interior seems to have originated in imperial times. Vienna's coffee house culture has been on UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage

List since 2011, but reaches far back to imperial times. The imperial and royal court confectioner Demel still serves Sisi's favorite sweet treat: candied violet petals.

## GREEN VIENNA

Slowing down comes easily: half of the city is made up of green spaces. These are evident approx. every 250 meters in the form of a park or at least a piece of green. The rose garden in the Volksgarten is located in the city center and is a feast for the eyes and nose from spring to late autumn thanks to the 400 different varieties of flowering rose. Find a spot here, close your eyes, and let the city work its magic on you.



The Green Prater, which according to the magazine "Focus" is one of the ten best city parks in the world, covers an area of six million square meters. Although it is located only three linear kilometers from St. Stephen's Cathedral, nature is thriving in this area. Its vast lawns, woods, and water areas offer an ideal environment for relaxing strolls, brisk hikes, extended jogging tours, bicycle and skating trips, and much more.

#### HITS FOR KIDS

What do children expect from a sightseeing trip? Pretty much the same as the grownups do: Variety and entertainment. Many Viennese museums and organizers have therefore created programs that are fun for the entire family – The motto is "hands on."

The Austrian capital has plenty of space for action. Unlike many other major cities, Vienna boasts huge green areas where children can play to their hearts' content. But that is by no means all. Maybe a little princess would like to dance a minuet in a hooped skirt and old-fashioned bodice? Become a child artist? Stroke some snakes? No problem. Dive into the colorful adventure world of the Prater, Vienna's oldest and most popular amusement park, where 250 different stands and attractions wait for you. Or visit the oldest continuously operating zoo in the world –

Schönbrunn Zoo. Vienna is the perfect destination for every age!

#### WINTER IN VIENNA

Vienna is beautiful any time of the year, however during winter season Austria's capital is filled with festive lights and a romantic atmosphere unlike any other city. Ice skating in front of city hall, glamorous ball nights and festive Winter markets are only a few of the special experiences Vienna has to offer in the winter season. Take a romantic ride in a traditional horse-drawn carriage, cozy up under the warm blankets and marvel at the illuminated buildings and streets. With a little bit of luck, fresh snow will turn the city into a winter wonderland.



#### SPECIAL TIP: VIENNA CITY CARD

##### USE THE VIENNA CITY CARD TO MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR VISIT!

Available for 24h, 48h and 72h it allows you to enjoy numerous benefits such as free use of all public transport by Wiener Linien and discounts for museums, restaurants and shops. Especially as a family you can use the Vienna City Card to its fullest potential, as it allows one child up to the age of 15 to travel free with each card holder.





# Pakistan

## KAILASH FESTIVALS

A unique Kailash Valley, the remaining minority of approximately 3500 people living in three isolated but beautiful valleys known as Bumburet, Rambur, and Berir. The people of Kailash have a rich culture and are very strong footed about their identity. These people stand out from the remaining tribes, cultures, and communities due to their distinct traditions, religious practices, and festivals.

The people of Kailash celebrate many festivals during the year but notable festivals are three, the spring feast Chilam Joshi, in May, Uchal or Utchal, in August and Choimus, in winter. Chilam Joshi is one the most important festival, this four-day festival is celebrated across all three valleys of Bumburet, Rambur, and Berir. Chilam Joshi begins with "Milk day" which, Kailash people store from household to offer their libation on the day of the festival. They ask for the blessing of God and pray for a prosperous year of agriculture, health, and safety of their herds. The main purpose of this festival is that Kailash men and women can find a spouse for themselves to get married. The women wear traditional attire with lively colors whereas, men wear traditional Shalwar Kameez with a waistcoat made of wool.

### **Uchal or Utchal**

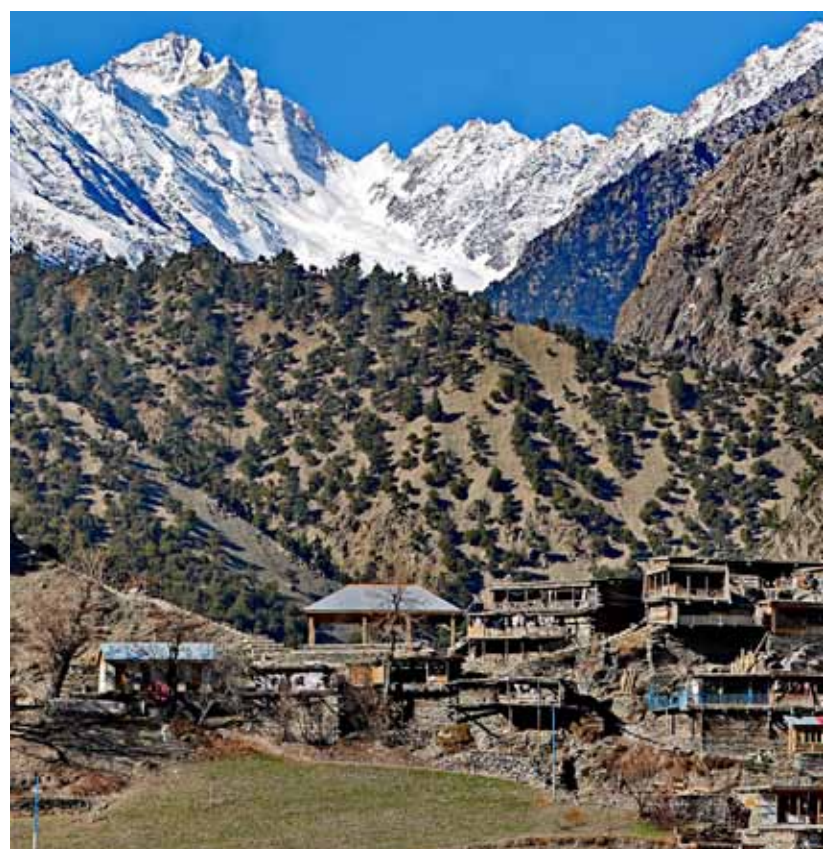
Uchal, also known as Utchal is a summer Kailash festival. During





The festival celebrated in annual harvesting with singing, dancing and paying homage to the nature for blessing them with good food and fruits. It is marked in the barley and wheat harvest season every year in August. Kailash people prepare cornbread, buttermilk, and cheese to celebrate the festival. They wear their traditional black robes, ornate cowries shelled headdresses and adorned with coloured necklaces and dance in a circle. During the festival, prayers and processions are held at a high plateau outside the village in Balangkuru, where the long night of dancing begins. The Uchal festival continues for several days and moving on to different locations within the valley.

Choimus is the winter festival, from 8-21 December, the most important celebration of the winter solstice and the return of the sun. Everyone wears new clothes, dance, feasts, and offer sacrifices. The first week of Choimus is for the Kailash people only. It is celebrated by feasting until the elders, who sit on a hilltop, watching the sun reaching the orbit, declare the beginning of the New Year. In the second week of Choimus, people show gratitude to their god with dance, music, and the sacrifice of goats. This part of a festival is public. It is dedicated to the god Balimain who is believed to visit from the mythical homeland of the Kailash, Tsyam, for the duration of the feast. Food sacrifices are offered at the clans' Jeshtak shrines, dedicated to the ancestors.



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# Maldives

## The sunny side of life

Maldives, officially the Republic of Maldives, is an archipelagic state in the Indian subcontinent, situated in the Indian Ocean. Located between the Arabian and Laccadive seas, roughly 500 miles southwest of Sri Lanka, the Maldives is about as isolated as you can get – and that's just another one of its many allures.

The island nation of the Maldives is popular with honeymooners looking for seclusion and adventurers looking to explore the depths of the sea on a scuba diving and snorkeling excursion. Travelers seeking relaxation can unwind at one of the island spas and all visitors should certainly spend a day exploring the Maldivian capital of Malé.

The hotels in this region are also spectacular, ranging from underwater hotels to overwater private bungalows to incredibly beautiful resorts.

The best time to visit the Maldives is from November to April. The island nation is warm and sunny year-round, but consists of a dry season and a wet, rainy season. There are pros and cons to visiting in each season. Travelers will experience the best weather in the Maldives between November and April, thanks to little precipitation and warm temperatures. Unfortunately, this is also the busiest time of year and, as such, the room rates at resorts are





expensive. However, since each resort inhabits its own island, you won't have to contend with throngs of crowds like you might during the high season in another destination.

May to October is considered the rainy season, with the islands seeing between 5 and 10 inches of precipitation monthly and often strong winds. Visitors will likely find better deals for this time of year.

The Maldives has been an Islamic nation since the 12th century. With this rich heritage, you'll find religious traditions entrenched in the culture.

The Maldives have a range of different habitats including deep sea, shallow coast, and reef ecosystems, fringing mangroves, wetlands and dry land. There are 187 species of coral forming the coral reefs. This area of the Indian Ocean, alone, houses 1,100 species of fish, 5 species of sea turtle, 21 species of whale and dolphin, 400 species of mollusc, and 83 species of echinoderms. The area is also populated by a number of crustacean species: 120 copepods, 15 amphipods, as well as more than 145 crab and 48 shrimp species.



[visitmaldives.com](http://visitmaldives.com)



# Hurawalhi Island Resort, Maldives

## Perfect Blend of serenity, intimacy and adventure



Set on an enchanting private island in the pristine Lhaviyani Atoll in the Maldives, Hurawalhi Island Resort is much like your relationship: it is a perfect match of serenity and excitement, comfort and adventure; it stirs up your every atom with an intricate blend of intimacy and thrill.

It is at Hurawalhi that you can fill your days with an unsparing amount of extraordinaires, your mind with wonder, and your heart with romance. The 90-villa, adults-only luxury resort is as brilliant as the ocean that laps against its beaches and more magnificent than any island you have visited. You can swoon over photos of the Maldives, but nothing will prepare you for the beautiful blend of barefoot bliss and contemporary design found at Hurawalhi.

Villas at Hurawalhi spoil with lavish comfort, exclusivity and mesmerizing views. With the choice of beachside and over-water luxury, you can revel in your preferred perspective and setting, and find pleasure in having paradise at your fingertips - and the ocean on your doorstep.

[Hurawalhi.com](http://Hurawalhi.com)





# Kagi Maldives Spa Island Pure Life

**K**agi Maldives Spa Island is located at the tip of North Malé, which is in the heart of Malé atoll, in close proximity of Velana International Airport (54km). A charming unpretentious island, for those seeking the natural connection between wellness and relaxation. Kagi is part of the very well known Maldivian concept of "One Island – One Resort". The island is 42,421 square metres (10.48 Acres/4.24 Hectares) in size with 691metres of beach line. Explore our signature tropical island journeys and fall in love with the simplicity of life.

When staying in Kagi Maldives Spa Island, you are bound to discover the harmony between living healthy and joyfully. Our journeys will take you on a venture filled with authentic Maldivian luxury and

moments beyond all your expectations.

Whether traveling solo or together with your loved ones, in Kagi Maldives you take the plunge in simplified elegance and unveil the essence of Pure Life.

Feeling energetic or prefer to relax, discover the Pure Life Experiences specially crafted for the well-being of your mind, body and soul. It is in Kagi where you can embrace each moment through the pure beauty which appears after shedding ostentation, gimmicks and opening oneself to feel and remember.

[Kagimaldives.com](http://Kagimaldives.com)



# WESTIN MALDIVES MIRIANDHOO RESORT

## RELAX AND RECONNECT WITH YOUR LOVED ONES



You'd be forgiven for thinking that the perfectly blue waters of The Maldives are only for romantic couples and honeymooners, but the Indian Ocean archipelago have much more to offer other travellers, especially families. The Maldives, open to all, show why they're much more than a honeymoon paradise and in fact represent one of the most amazing family vacation destinations imaginable, with kids clubs to keep the little ones entertained all day and jaw-dropping villas to let mom and dad kick back in stylish peace. Huge private villas with pools, endless ways to explore crystal-clear waters, kids clubs with round-the-clock babysitting are just some of the reasons why it has become a hugely popular draw for discerning visitors.

Situated in the stunning Baa Atoll UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve has a kids program that boasts of exciting workshops that

encourage kids to 'Sea Clearly' by learning about and appreciating the stunning natural world around them. That means exploring pristine white sand beaches, snorkelling the azure waters to see the mind-blowing diversity of sea life, parasailing for the more adventurous, fishing or maybe just playing games and sports which are themed around sustainability and the ocean.

With something fun for everyone, the five-star wellness resort welcomes little ones to The Westin Family Kids Club®. With a large outdoor recreation area, a tennis court and space for other sports as well as a beachside swimming pool, The Westin Kids Club® is available for young guests, aged four to 12, with special supervised fun activities and programs every day.

[westin-maldives.com](http://westin-maldives.com)





# YOU'RE *Maldives* DREAMS STARTS HERE!



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# Capital Travel & Tours

## Maldives

A visionary, a pioneer and a business leader who is willing to face the challenges of a changing global business environment.



**Y**oosuf Riffath is a dynamic entrepreneur who has successfully launched and managed new business concepts in the Maldives. He is a leading figure and a pioneer in the tourism industry. His strength lies in his pioneering spirit coupled with his organizational capacity, his capacity to network and engage with others, to bring in their participation, for the development of the industry.

In 1981, Mr. Riffath was a young aspiring youth, working in the civil service, on the lookout for opportunities, the most appealing of which at the time was the budding tourism industry. His opportunity came when he saw a vacancy ad in the papers for a post in one of the largest resort operators in the country, Universal Enterprises. It was here he learnt the ropes of the industry working in various departments of the Company. After nine years in Universal and equipped with the experience gained, Riffath started his own company, Capital Travel & Tours. From its humble beginnings, the Company has become one of the most prominent travel agents and tour operators in the country. At a time when resorts were heavily leaning on the business of foreign tour operators, it was an uphill battle for small local firms. A number of travel agents were formed

during that time, but it was only a few that succeeded. It was Riffath's determination and his vision to succeed that enabled him to rise above the rest and gain the confidence of the resort operators in order to create one of the most successful local travel agencies during this period.

During his long career in the tourism industry Riffath has helped develop the industry especially the tour operators segment, making it a significant player that the industry has to engage with. In 2006 Riffath together with others founded MATATO, the Maldives Association of Travel Agents and Tour Operators, a platform for local travel agents and tour operators to work together with the resort operators to gain their confidence and help build the sector by offering a unified front. MATATO currently has more than 50 members and is one of the most active organizations in the tourism industry.

Riffath is always in the forefront in his untiring efforts to develop and promote the industry. He is also a founding member of the Liveaboard Association of Maldives, established to promote the Liveaboard sector of the tourism industry. Furthermore, Riffath is also the founder and President of Association of Travel Agents founded in 2014.

While Capital Travel & Tours has membership of the most prominent international industry associations such as the International Coalition of Travel Partners, ICTP, Pacific Asia Travel Association, PATA American Society of Travel Agents, ASTA, Riffath has worked to develop greater engagement of the local industry with such international associations. Riffath has been serving as the Chapter President of ASTA since 1995. He has also served as a Director of the Board at the Maldives Marketing & Public Relations Corporation (MMPRC), the state organization responsible for the promotion of tourism.

Riffath's vision is on the tourism industry, be it matters related to its operation or youth participation and employment in the industry. In 2002 he formed Astrabon Pvt. Ltd., yet another pioneering venture, dedicated to providing resorts with operational supplies of a quality befitting the upmarket tourism industry of the country. The Company is a tremendous success with a portfolio that includes the most respective brands of kitchenware and related products from around the world.

Getting people to take part in the tourism industry, connecting them with business partners, providing those with opportunities on which they can stand on, these are things that Riffath is passionate about. In his quest to get youth participation in the economy and to create a platform for young people to prepare for employment, in 2006, he formed the Employment bureau (Maldives) Pvt. Ltd. The broad objective was to complement



the national effort to strengthen the human resource base of the country, offering a variety of training opportunities. Riffath serves as the president of Employment Bureau Pvt. Ltd.

Riffath sees the development of small-scale local tourism as the next big frontier. He is already planning and implementing ways and means to provide a platform that can be used by local tourism agencies and guesthouses in the operation and marketing of their businesses. His vision is to implement ways to support the segment by offering comprehensive solutions

that will assist in the development of the sector.

Riffath is a visionary, a pioneer and a business leader who is willing to face the challenges of a changing global business environment. Capital Travel & Tours is one example which demonstrates his ability to evolve with changing times and changing global demand. He has the innate capacity to see the opportunities in the market and develop business models that fits perfectly into existing gaps. During his illustrious career in the industry, he has served to develop the industry and worked for the development of others in the industry.



# COLOURS OF OBLU

A fun and chilled-out tropical getaway



The highly anticipated announcement of Atmosphere Hotels|Resorts' new brand COLOURS OF OBLU comes with the opening of two resorts - OBLU SELECT Lobigili and OBLU XPERIENCE Ailafushi. Located in North Malé Atoll, both resorts are convenient 15-minutes speedboat ride away from the Velana International Airport.

Opening in February 2022, OBLU SELECT Lobigili is an adults-only haven. Lobigili translates from Dhivehi as 'Island of Love.' With 68 vibrant chic beach and overwater villas, Lobigili Island is ideal for a chilled-out getaway. Romance permeates the air here. Idyllic tropical vistas complemented by stylishly designed spaces create a secluded, castaway feel.

Adding to the indulgence is the Only Blu Underwater Restaurant, opening in February 2022. The unique, multi-sensory culinary journey features gourmet cuisine with champagne set against a colourful backdrop of marine life. Residents at OBLU SELECT Lobigili can also choose to stroll over to neighbouring Ailafushi Island and mix it up with a different world of enchanting sights, sounds, and culture.



OBLU XPERIENCE Ailafushi, opening in March 2022, is all about immersing in a free-spirited Maldivian vibe. In the local language of Dhivehi, 'Aila' means family and 'Fushi' means island. True to its name, this 268-villa resort brings a fresh, experiential environment where families, friends, couples, and global nomads can all enjoy a wonderful island escape.

A fun and chilled-out balance is at the heart of this tropical getaway. Guests can join a group Zumba class or book a 3D movie show at The Dome, a futuristic 15-meter entertainment centre available from July 2022. Or they can choose to socialise with like-minded souls at La Promenade that offers exhilarating retail and café hopping options. To conclude a wonderful day spent in paradise they can feast over an alfresco spread celebrating the finest seafood at The Copper Pot Truck.



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# Thailand

## Destination Wellness



Thailand, as a travel destination, is well-known for its pristine shores and clear blue waters. Featuring some of the world's most famous island getaways, endless boutique accommodations, luxury resorts, first-class hospitality and all the latest technologies – it's not hard to see why Thailand is at the top of the list when it comes to wellness escapes.

World-renowned wellness retreats and services can be found dotted across Thailand's vast landscape. From the spectacular mountains and lush valleys of Northern Thailand to the palm-fringed islands of Southern Thailand, there is something to suit every desire, making Thailand the ultimate destination for those seeking to improve their health and wellness.

Looking for state-of-the-art medical treatment? Bangkok should be number on the list. Offering a wide array of procedures, treatments and services, including programmes, operations, dental, fertility treatments, as well as surgical procedures such as laser, cosmetic and cardiovascular. Popular treatments range from simple treatments including laser teeth whitening and bodytite liposuction, to more complex treatments such as

hip replacements, heart surgery and hair restoration. Whatever the desire, Thailand is fully equipped with highly experienced Doctors with international expertise, extensively reduced prices and shorter waiting times.

Thailand is also famous for its array of holistic wellness and healing offerings, resulting in a burgeoning rise of tourism solely for wellness purposes. Thailand provides a multitude of offerings, with many packages being able to be tailored personally to meet individual needs and desires. Thailand's wellness destinations, whether located in the hustle and bustle of Bangkok or on a remote private island, provide guests with services, amenities and treatments that help relax, rejuvenate and refresh the mind, body and soul. Thailand offers a range of holistic therapies from Eastern and Western traditions all aiming to promote wellness while focusing on the mind, body and spirit. Yoga, meditation, acupuncture, naturopathy, colon hydrotherapy, infrared sauna treatments and Reiki are just some of the offerings available at Thailand's specialized retreats and resorts.

In addition, Thailand is also fully equipped with a range of health and fitness retreats for those seeking a body overhaul and interested in learning the tricks to becoming the best version of themselves. Whether it be a boot camp with a view, a Muay Thai Camp with the highest caliber of trainers, or a week of clean eating or detoxing, Thailand has something for the beginners, the intermediates and the professionals alike.

Thailand, a land blessed by nature, year-round sunshine and smiling hospitality, is undoubtedly the ideal destination for those seeking to improve their health, both physically and mentally. Whether travelling alone or with a family, whether on a budget or looking to splurge, an endless array of health and wellness options awaits in the Land of Smiles.





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