

BBC One: Our Changing Planet

Swim with manta rays with The Manta Trust, at InterContinental Maldives Maamunagau Resort



“Right here, right now, is probably the best place on the planet for a wildlife encounter that has to be seen to be believed”, Steve Backshall, swimming with manta rays at Hanifaru Bay, for BBC One ‘Our Changing Planet’

(May 2022) Home to some of the Manta Trust research team that feature in the current BBC series ‘Our Changing Planet’, guests at [InterContinental Maldives Maamunagau Resort](#) can enjoy manta ray interactions, education and experiences that go well beyond a typical holiday snorkeling trip. With the Maamunagau Lagoon being an important feeding ground for juvenile manta rays, guests can meet the Manta Trust team and learn more about their ongoing research to protect and conserve manta rays, experience swimming alongside these gentle giants, as well as take the exclusive opportunity to name and adopt newly discovered manta rays to support the work of the Manta Trust.

When the resort opened in 2019, the InterContinental Maldives partnered with the Manta Trust, one of the world’s leading manta ray research organisations, to support a team on the island. The Project based on Maamunagau island is led by Maldives Project Manager for the Raa Atoll, Jess Haines, an experienced Marine Biologist who grew up in Oxfordshire and now lives and works from the resort. Alongside conducting their research, the team offers a range of hands-on activities to engage guests in their current research and invites guests to join them to swim with the ocean’s gentle giants and learn about the manta rays they swim with, through the use of photographic identification. The team also offer educational evening talks, and mini manta biology sessions at the resort’s kids club ‘Planet Trekkers’, enabling guests to gain a new perspective on marine conservation efforts.

In addition, and only available at partnering Manta Trust resorts, guests at InterContinental Maldives are also offered a unique opportunity to ‘name and adopt a manta’, to support the work of the Manta Trust and their global efforts to protect them. With every manta having its own unique pattern of spots on its belly, much like a human fingerprint, when a new manta is identified, guests can take the opportunity of a one-time adoption fee that includes naming the manta ray forever and a digital adoption pack.

Filming alongside the BBC team, Jess Haines comments, “I love sharing my passion for manta rays with guests, and to share what we do with the BBC film crew and the rest of the world is a dream come true. The BBC programme focusses on how the changing climate will affect the manta rays in our waters, and I believe that education is our best hope of saving one of our planet’s most endangered eco-systems”.

The research methodologies you see featured in the new BBC series are all used by Jess and the Manta Trust team based at InterContinental Maldives to conduct their research on the Raa Atoll manta ray population. These research methodologies such as contactless ultrasound work, stereovideo photogrammetry to measure manta ray wingspans and zooplankton sampling, each help to better understand the life history traits of this vulnerable species and what impacts they might be facing with a changing climate.

Other recent important work by Jess and the Manta Trust team includes research to establish a Marine Protected Area (MPA) around the resort, reef and lagoonal system where juvenile and adult manta rays aggregate to feed and clean. Maamunagau is of particular importance for its high presence of resident juvenile manta rays and is a nursery ground for this vulnerable species. With less than 1% of reefs in the Maldives currently designated as MPAs, the government aims to increase this by 2023, so Jess's team have proposed for this Maamunagau nursery site for reef manta rays and an important area for other marine species, to be designated protection, with the research results and proposal now submitted to the Environmental Protection agency (EPA) for consideration.

An exclusive private island resort, situated on the southernmost tip of the Raa Atoll, next to UNESCO biosphere reserve Baa Atoll, [InterContinental Maldives Maamunagau Resort](#) enjoys one of the most secluded locations in the Maldives. Offering near year-round opportunities to see and swim with manta rays, InterContinental Maldives is set within a large natural lagoon, with a colourful house reef and a chance to see small reef sharks and sometimes turtles. Manta rays are frequent visitors between December-April each year in Maamunagau, due to the lagoon offering a safe home for a juvenile population, with adults also spotted as they aggregate to feed and clean during the Northeast Monsoon months. Just south of the resort and a short boat ride away sits the Maldives' UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, Baa Atoll, home to Hanifaru Bay, one of the very few places in the world to witness mass feeding aggregations of manta rays during the Southwest Monsoon months June-November each year, and where visitors can snorkel amongst large groups of manta rays which can reach up to 100+ individuals around the full moon and new moon period.

Offering world class service, including being the first resort worldwide to offer Club InterContinental® benefits to all guests, there are 81 spacious, stylish villas and residences at InterContinental Maldives Maamunagau Resort, which combine with extensive wellness facilities, bespoke experiences and six restaurants and bars to offer a luxurious experience for families, friends and couples.

[Kenwood Travel](#) is offering a 25% saving on a seven-night stay at InterContinental Maldives Maamunagau Resort, now from £3,155 per person, based on two sharing an overwater pool villa on a half board basis and including return international flights with Etihad Airways from London Heathrow and seaplane transfers. Also included are complimentary Club InterContinental® benefits, including daily afternoon tea served from 3-5pm and evening aperitifs served from 5pm til 7pm at the pool bar or adults-only Retreat. Book by 29 May 2022; price based on 14 June 2022 departure . Visit kenwoodtravel.co.uk or call 020 7749 9241

For more information, please visit www.maldives.intercontinental.com For real time updates, follow on Facebook at facebook.com/intercontinentalmaldives and Instagram [@intercontinental_maldives](https://instagram.com/intercontinental_maldives).

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Press kit & media images can be found here: [Press Kit](#)

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