



Northern Atolls

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Why Go?

The least developed region of the Maldives, the northern atolls remain almost unknown to foreigners, and that makes them a great place to experience untouched, traditional Maldivian life. Maldivian history owes much to this part of the country – national hero Mohammed Thakurufaanu, the man who drove the Portuguese out of the Maldives in the 16th century, was born on the island of Utheemu in Haa Alifu Atoll. The island is today a place of pilgrimage for Maldivians, who come to see his small wooden ‘palace’.

There’s also huge diving potential throughout the region; there are wrecks along the western fringe of the atolls, many only now being properly explored and documented. Anyone lucky enough to visit can expect to have the place pretty much to themselves. With just a handful of resorts (including some of the country’s most exclusive), the northern atolls are a great destination for escape and solitude.

Haa Alifu

Traditionally known as Ihavandhippolhu and North Thiladhunmathee Atolls, the very northern tip of the Maldives is generally known to one and all as Haa Alifu Atoll, even though this refers to an administrative district that actually comprises the small, trapezoid-shaped Ihavandhippolhu Atoll and the northern tip of North Thiladhunmathee Atoll.

Haa Alifu contains the island of **Utheemu** (population 900), by far the most interesting and historic island in the Northern Atolls, if not the entire country. The birthplace of Sultan Mohammed Thakurufaanu, who, with his brothers, overthrew Portuguese rule in 1573, the island is centred around a memorial to this Maldivian hero, with a small museum and library, opened in 1986. Thakurufaanu’s well-preserved wooden palace has been restored and Utheemu is a popular destination for Maldivians paying homage to their national hero. Visitors are escorted around the small complex by a member of staff from the **museum** (admission Rf 25;

Northern Atolls

0 50 km
0 30 miles

NORTHERN ATOLLS HAA ALIFU

