



MALDIVES

Manta Passion



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THE EXPEDITION

This expedition has been specifically designed for people who are **IN LOVE with manta rays**, and are eager to see as much of them as possible! The trip is timed to coincide with the most productive monsoon winds and lunar currents, which strongly influence the movements and feeding habits of reef manta rays. The aim of this trip is to use the knowledge of Manta Trust experts to find feeding aggregations, and allow guests to experience the wonder of immersing themselves amongst a feeding frenzy of these gentle giants.

Differing from other Manta Expeditions, on this trip we aim to **dive almost exclusively with mantas**, carrying out long surveys on both cleaning and feeding sites, exploring and looking for new manta aggregation sites and undertake more in-depth research activities. Activities planned to be undertaken on this special expeditions include animal wing span measurements, ultrasound scanning for pregnancies and photo identification!

Baa Atoll is off the main route for the majority of dive liveboards. We will venture into this more northern atoll for a few days specifically to seek out the spectacular feeding mantas of Hanifaru Bay (and hopefully a few whale sharks as well!). To see one of the world's largest fish feeding amongst dozens of one of the world's largest rays is something most people will never forget.

On this particular expedition we will venture further north into **Raa and Noonu Atoll**. Here we will conduct surface and in-water surveys, with the aim of identifying new manta aggregation sites whilst gathering critical data on the mantas inhabiting these remote atoll, of which little is currently known.

Ari Atoll hosts the second largest manta population in the country, and we will have chances of finding both manta feeding and cleaning aggregations. The highlight of this atoll is the opportunity of swimming with **mantas feeding at night** within one of the local lagoons. While the weather in the Maldives at this time of the year is likely to be more variable, these monsoonal conditions are exactly what create the planktonic blooms upon which the mantas and whale sharks aggregate to feed. Furthermore, we can never guarantee these natural events, but we have put together a trip which maximises our chances of being in the right place at the right time, guided by the expertise of the Manta Trust scientist Niv Froman.





MANTA EXPERT

NIV FROMAN

Niv has been passionate about nature for as long as he can remember. His dream has always been to live in close contact with the world's wild places and to try to understand their fascinating mysteries. After graduating summa cum laude with a degree in Natural Sciences from the University of Milan, Niv completed a Masters degree in Environmental Management, focusing primarily on animal behaviour and evolution.



In 2010, Niv started working as a marine biologist in the Maldives, an experience that brought him closer to marine life and developed his passion for the underwater world. Building on his background as a professional swimmer, Niv quickly became a proficient freediver and qualified as a Dive Master.

Following his first encounters with the Maldivian manta rays, their complex and poorly understood behaviour drove his desire to learn more about these majestic animals and work to aid in their conservation. It was this drive that brought Niv to the Manta Trust, with whom he worked as the Project Leader for the Maldivian Manta Ray Project from 2013 to 2017.

In 2017 Niv moved on to lead the development of the IDtheManta platform as Global Database Manager and began in 2018 his PhD on the reproductive ecology of the reef manta population of the Maldives at Cambridge University. This exciting new project aims to shed new light into the mysterious life of these gentle giants and aid improving their conservation status.

Throughout the expedition, Niv will be providing lectures and informal talks on manta ray and whale shark research and conservation. In addition, Niv will conduct general presentations on marine biology, with a focus on the diverse and productive marine ecosystems of the Republic of Maldives.

CITIZEN SCIENCE - GET INVOLVED!

On this expedition, you'll have the opportunity to experience and participate in cutting-edge conservation research to protect one of the ocean's most majestic animals. Manta Trust scientists will be collecting photographic identification images of all mantas encountered throughout the expedition - a task that guests are welcome and encouraged to participate in. All new manta rays will be added to the database and guests will be invited to name these new mantas.

THE MANTA TRUST

A UK registered charity, the Trust's mission is to advance the worldwide conservation of manta rays and their habitat through robust science and research, by raising awareness and providing education, influence and action. The Manta Trust was formed in 2011 to co-ordinate global research and conservation efforts for these amazing animals, their close relatives and their habitat. The Manta Trust has a number of research projects worldwide, incorporating population data, research on manta movements, and genetic analyses - to name a few - in order to better understand the general ecology of manta and mobula rays.



THE BOAT | M/Y CONTE MAX

Back in 2004, the Maldives did not offer many boats that boasted the same comfort and standard for non-divers as the country's various island resorts. With the launch of the Conte Max that year, the concept of a cruise that combines the rejuvenating experience of diving in the Maldives, with the wellbeing of an on-board ayurvedic spa, was born.

Since its launch, the Conte Max has become one of the best-known and best-loved boats amongst those that regularly visit the Maldives. At 33m (108 ft) in length, she offers eight elegant and comfortable cabins, each with their own spacious en-suite bathroom and air-conditioning. Scuba diving excursions are delivered by a traditional Maldivian dhoni that accompanies the main vessel. If taking a break from the underwater world, the Conte Max offers three sundecks, a bar, two restaurants, onboard WiFi, and TV + CD/DVD player facilities, with a wide-collection of music and movies on offer to help you relax.

BOOKING

To reserve your place on this special Maldives 'Manta Passion' expedition, please send an email to Niv Froman via info@mantaexpeditions.com.

Payment and booking for this trip will be handled directly by Manta Expeditions. Trip costs for this 14-nights expedition includes transfers from Malé, full board, three dives / snorkelling excursions per day and free NITROX.

* Price excludes international flight, Hanifaru Bay Marine Protected Area Entry Fee (USD 30), Governmental Green Tax (USD 12 pppd) and service charge (USD 130 per week).

Upper deck cabin supplement USD 150 per person.

