

Shangri-La's Villingili Resort and Spa, Maldives Races Towards Fourth Quarter 2008 Opening

2008-03-03

Shangri-La's Villingili Resort and Spa, Maldives is on schedule to open for the traditional high season in the Maldives. The 142 all-villa property will debut the fourth quarter 2008 as the first luxury resort on the Addu Atoll in southern Maldives.

The resort on Villingili island is abuzz with more than 1,766 construction workers from 19 countries working tirelessly towards the completion of the project. A group of 27 local employees is currently undergoing basic service training and induction to the "Shangri-La Hospitality from Caring People" signature style.

One of the villa concepts that will be unique to the Maldives is the tree house villa. Each of these, measuring 218 square metres and perched on stilts with a private infinity pool, will offer a special three-metre-high perspective of the island through tropical foliage. The other four distinctive villa designs include water villas with terraces and outdoor showers extending over the clear ocean water, beach villas with separate bedroom and living room, twin beach villas comprising two pavilions and an infinity pool, pool villas and two presidential villas. All villas will be equipped with two iPods and a docking station, a DVD player, an espresso machine and a full range of luxury amenities.

Shangri-La's Villingili Resort and Spa will have two restaurants and five bars offering innovative dining experiences. All outlets will have stunning views of the ocean or lagoon, with some perched above the breaking waves. Khazaanage Restaurant's concept of three distinctive living rooms, each representing different cultures and cuisines, will be the first of its kind in the Maldives. The three living rooms will be themed to the Indian Ocean, South China Sea and the Arabian Gulf regions respectively.

The resort will feature CHI, The Spa at Shangri-La, a secluded sanctuary offering therapies based on Chinese and Himalayan well-being rituals and traditions. CHI will be located in its own spa village in the resort, with spacious individual treatment villas offering "spa within a spa" environments.

"The Village" will be an extensive 30,000-square-metre leisure and water activity focal point. Housed within "The Village" will be the Shangri-La Environmental Centre where guests will learn about the conservation works around Villingili -- marine and coral preservation, eco-friendly and energy saving measures adopted by the resort -- and enjoy talks about the colourful marine life at the resort's house reef and the best diving spots around the atoll.

Addu Atoll has more than 25 good diving sites teeming with marine life such as eagle rays, hawksbill turtles, black tip reef sharks, spinner dolphins, coral and colourful reef fish. Manta rays can be seen all year round. One of the best dive sites in the Maldives, the dramatic 140-metre shipwreck "British Loyalty" is located within a half-hour boat ride from Villingili Island. The shipwreck, with its hull resting at 33-metres, is covered in black coral.

The natural dense vegetation of Villingili island sets it apart from many other Maldives resorts. The three-kilometre-long island features 12 hectares of lush vegetation, 17,000 coconut trees, towering banyan trees, 45 species of plants, three natural lagoons and nature trails for guests to explore.

Villingili is surrounded by inhabited islands. Guests will take one of the regular speedboat runs to Gan and explore by bicycle the five neighbouring islands connected by a 17-kilometre road which is the longest in the Maldives. They will be able to set out with a picnic and discover the fascinating lifestyle and culture of untouched Maldivian villages or stop at a coffee shop to chat with the locals over a meal.

The Maldives' second international airport, Gan International Airport, is an eight-minute boat ride away from the resort and Male International Airport is 70 minutes by air.

Hong Kong-based Shangri-La Hotels and Resorts currently owns and manages 55 hotels under Shangri-La and Traders brands with a rooms inventory of over 28,000.

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