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# DIVE! DIVE!

SARAH MODLOCK DONS HER NEOPRENE AND REPORTS ON

'From birth, man carries the weight of gravity on his shoulders. He is bolted to earth. But man has only to sink beneath the surface and he is free.' Jacques Cousteau knew better than most the sense of freedom that exists 30 metres below the surface of the sea. What started for me as an attempt to overcome a lifelong fear of deep water has grown into sixteen years of amazing experiences - from mission to passion.

Although there is much to be seen in British waters, most divers head for warm seas, tropical fish and excellent water clarity. It's possible to find professional dive centres in some of the world's most remote destinations and experience everything from supervised trial dives and courses for certification through to guided dives of the best local reefs and wrecks for those already qualified. Combining your underwater pleasures with luxurious delights on land gives you, literally, the best of worlds...



**Pictured right**

Top: An idyllic view from one of Fundo Lagoon's room verandas  
Below: The Lighthouse Bar at Baros is perfect for watching the sunset

# ! DIVE!

AQUATIC DELIGHTS OF PEMBA AND THE MALDIVES



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## Baros Island

The Maldives



Sea-side splendour at Baros  
Inset: the Salts Bar • breakfast in bed

**L**IKE a pearl perched in the ocean, Baros island on the south west edge of the North Male Atoll of the Maldives has a lustre and beauty which sets it apart. It may be hard to go wrong in the Maldives where paradise islands are ten-a-penny but the staff here make this place something special. In peak season, there are 230 staff for 150 guests. It's a tricky balance to strike. Too attentive and you cannot relax, too laid back and you can feel like the latest visitors to a desert island conveyor belt. The approach here is warm and real and so effective that just a week's stay will set you up for the next 12 months.

Upgraded and rebuilt a year ago by a Maldivian architect, the resort has elegant Thai, Balinese and Maldivian flavours. It has come a long way since 1973 when it was one of the first tourist islands and is now one of the 'Small Luxury Hotels of the World'. Not bad for an island that is so tiny you can walk all the way round it in five minutes yet feels so uncrowded there is a pervading sense of fresh air and freedom.

Rooms here strip away every ounce of travel or work weariness. Contemporary and chic Baros villas have huge beds, sea-side verandas and best of all, open air bathrooms where you can sink back and look at the stars. Sumptuous octagonal water villas also have coconut-thatched roofs and bathtubs for two with ocean views. The water around them sparkles with parrot fish and cheeky baby sharks.

Paying a visit to the coral gardens beneath the crystal clear water is a must. The impressive dive

centre here has been owned and run by German-born Sepp Zedelmayer for almost 30 years.

Another special aspect of Baros is its house reef. Not all islands have them but this one must be the best in the archipelago. Staff are only too happy to

## The island's so tiny you can walk round it in five minutes

deliver all your kit to the beach where lessons begin while qualified divers and buddies can just walk into the sea and enjoy 'fish soup' from depths of three to 23 metres. Expect to be surrounded by butterfly and angelfish, squirrelfish and triggerfish and entire companies of fusiliers.

Beyond the house reef are more than 30 local dives sites that the team know well. There are two one-hour dives per day with boat trips ranging from ten minutes to 50 minutes. I recommend borrowing or buying a diving torch to see the full potential of the coral here, which has suffered some bleaching from El Niño. If the weather is right, get out to Manta Point, a ray cleaning station where you can watch these

stunning, rippling creatures arriving to be spruced up by helpful cleaner fish.

After enjoying sea life under the water it does not seem quite right to scoff it back on dry land. That feeling soon fades. The food here is divine:-

And you can eat in your villa, on the beach, on a boat or in one of the three wonderful restaurants. The Lighthouse, Cayenne Grill, and The Lime all have impeccable food and will delight your senses with fragrant, delicious flavour combinations. Tuna tartare, filo spun tiger prawns with passion fruit, champagne rose sorbet, lamb salad and grilled lobster are just some of the dishes created by Australian chef, Damian Barrett, alongside Maldivian specialities and everything from sushi boxes to burgers for lunch. Catching your own dinner on a sunset fishing trip is great fun. You're sure to want intimate knowledge of the well-chosen wine list, too. ■

### Information

Kuoni Travel (01306 747008 or [www.kuoni.co.uk](http://www.kuoni.co.uk)) offers seven nights on Baros Maldives in a deluxe villa with breakfast, including flights with Monarch Airlines from Gatwick and transfers to and from the resort from £1229 per person based on two people sharing. [www.baros.com](http://www.baros.com)