

TRAVEL WEEKLY

Insight • Luxury Insight

A life-changing Maldives manta ray expedition with Four Seasons

Jeri Clausing

One of my favorite trips in recent years was a visit last fall to the Four Seasons resorts in the Maldives, where we had the chance on two occasions to snorkel with manta rays.

It's hard to explain the magical, life-changing experience of watching these gentle giants, with wingspans up to 10 feet, do endless somersaults below you, or of floating still as they swim, one by one, straight at you, waiting until the very last second to dip just inches below you.

This year, Four Seasons is offering two opportunities to take that experience to another level with two **Manta Trust Expeditions** onboard the **Four Seasons Explorer** yacht with Guy Stevens, manta ray expert and founder of the world's largest manta ray charity, which he first established at Four Seasons Resort Maldives at Landaa Giraavaru.



The Four Seasons Explorer's Manta Trust Expeditions feature free-diving and snorkeling with manta rays.

The Four Seasons Explorer's Manta Trust Expeditions offer a rare insight into the pioneering research that Stevens' team has developed over the years. Participants will be able to free-dive and snorkel with mantas alongside the marine biologists, recording critical environmental information, taking manta ID photos and joining in the process of naming any newly

sighted mantas.

“From population size, migratory routes and life history strategies, to social interactions, growth rates, life span, reproduction and more, every time we enter the water with manta rays, we improve our knowledge of them – and the global steps required to protect them,” Stevens said. “Escorting these trips has the added benefit of transporting me back to that incredible moment when I first swam with a manta ray as guests have their own first manta encounter. It was life-changing for me and I never tire of seeing the impact it has on others, too.”

The Four Seasons Explorer is a floating PADI 5-Star dive center, Manta Trust research Lab and floating luxury resort with accommodations and activities for up to 22 guests. The trips offer access to six different atolls, as well as activities like surfing, remote island village visits, desert island BBQs, kayaking, wakeboarding, waterskiing, handline or bottom-line fishing from a dhoni, sunbathing decks and spa treatments.

Refurbished in 2017, the 128-foot Explorer has 10 cabins and its signature Explorer Suite with a private sun-bathing terrace.