



## **Phased opening of the tourism sector set for July**

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The Maldives is getting ready to ease border restrictions, with a phased re-opening to welcome visitors once again. The tourism sector is in the process of establishing the necessary protocols to suit the new normal.

Work on protection, mitigation, and management of Covid-19 began as early as January this year. A National Coronavirus Taskforce was constituted by the President and an all-government effort was launched with multiagency participation. The Health Protection Agency has been leading the effort with the support of the National Disaster Management Authority, in close consultation with the World Health Organization.

The country decided to suspend on arrival visas soon after recording the first cases of Covid-19. A lockdown was imposed in the Greater Male' Area with the first instance of community transmission on 15<sup>th</sup> April. However, with the number of cases reaching a manageable rate, and with strengthened precautionary measures, the government eased restrictions internally on 28<sup>th</sup> May, almost six weeks after the lockdown was imposed.

The government has been working to commence tourist operations, with stringent safety guidelines to safeguard the health and well-being of visitors to the country and those who work in the industry. With the steps that have been taken the government is confident of the measures that have been put in place and are preparing to gradually open up borders in July.

According to the Ministry of Tourism, a first draft of the safety guidelines relating to the commencement of tourism was circulated among stakeholders, for which comments are being received. Guidelines will be finalized and shared with the industry after consultation with all stakeholders. The Ministry has announced that the final version of the new guidelines does not include any new taxes or charges that will be imposed on visitors arriving to the country when borders open up. The Ministry also emphasized that the country's top priority would be to ensure the safety of visitors.

Maldives is a string of 1196 islands scattered across the ocean. Heavily reliant on the tourism sector, Maldives is famous for its unique one-island-one-resort concept. The isolated nature of the islands give visitors an ideal opportunity to enjoy our beautiful surroundings in luxurious safety and comfort, and the country is looking forward to welcoming visitors on our idyllic shores in the near future.

*For further information, please contact*

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