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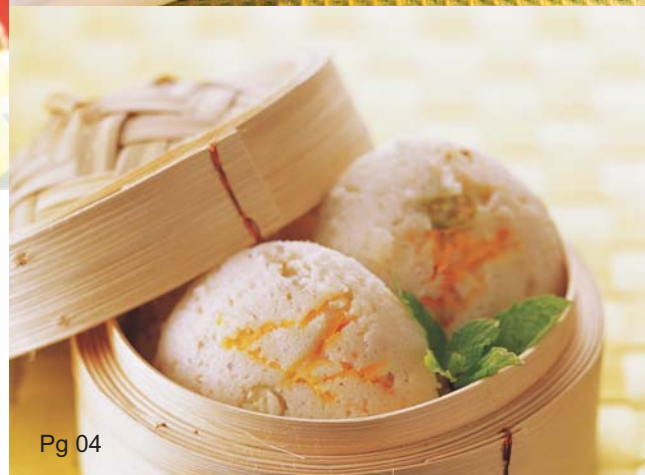
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Barefoot Luxury at Kanuhura, Maldives

*Sanjay Dalal and his
family find paradise at the
spectacular Kanuhura
Resort in Maldives*

If there's heaven on earth, it must be on an island in the Maldives, that stunning collection of natural atolls in the Indian Ocean! You haven't really seen the colours blue and green till you've taken in the vibrant hues of the sea and sky from the perspective of a little seaplane, and as we flew into Kanuhura from Male, we were completely dazzled. It was the most amazing seaplane ride we had ever taken and the view of the little islands dotting the ocean was quite breathtaking.

We were headed for Kanuhura, a magical resort located on its own private island on the eastern rim of Lhaviyani Atoll. Fringed by white coral sands and embraced by the warm clear blue waters of the Indian Ocean, Kanuhura is famed for its laidback luxury and authentic natural Maldivian charm. A member of the Leading Small Hotels of the World, the award winning resort offers the highest standards of accommodation, service and culinary experience. As we discovered soon enough.

Stepping off the seaplane, we were greeted by Kanuhura staff who packed us into a buggy and whisked us off to the reception where a refreshing welcome drink awaited us. Already we felt at home, on that tiny but beautiful island brimming with natural wonders. The first thing the staff recommended was that we kick off our footwear – barefoot and casual is the dress code in any part of the resort. “You’re on island after all,” they reminded us, and we were quite happy to comply!

The 5 star resort offers two different categories of luxury villas - beach villas on the island's coral sand fringe, and water villas set along sun bleached wooden pontoons with private sundecks and steps that lead to the water. We walked towards our beach villa and are charmed by the stone, timber and thatch structure, furnished with fine silk and cotton. Natural material has been used as far as possible, including driftwood washed up by the sea, and palm leaves crafted into sunshades and gazebos. We had our own private outdoor area with mesmerising views to the ocean, and it was difficult to tear our eyes from the magnificent vista and accompany the personal host on a tour of the villa.

Time stands still at Kanuhura. Every moment is like a celebration of nature and even if you do absolutely nothing other than stare at the views, your holiday will have been worth it. Luisa Sakirow, Assistant Sales and Marketing Manager, took us on a tour of the resort, and we found there was plenty to do. With four restaurants and two bars, an Asian style spa, kids club, swimming pool, games room, orchid grove and chef's garden, we were quite spoilt for choice! We also had the option of more than 40 dive sites in the area, water sports opportunities, and boat rides.

We were certainly in paradise! With the staff attending to our every need, we proceeded to make the most of our time on the heavenly island. The resort is very kid-friendly, which is a great plus point for families like mine. So while the children had plenty to keep them occupied, my wife and I concentrated on enjoying the Kanuhura experience...barefoot of course!

The white coral sand beach was bathed in early morning sunlight as I took off for my run, and I returned to a lavish breakfast spread - home made cereals, freshly cut fruit served stylishly, muffins, scones, bagels, breads, Danish pastries, eggs to order, waffles, pancakes and crepes with fillings of your choice. While some guests started their day with freshly brewed coffee or champagne, I opted for muesli and skim milk, followed by a dip in the pool.

There was much to do yet. Armed with a picnic basket and loads of beach toys, we took the speedboat to Jehunuhura Island, a mere two minute ride from the Kanuhura. After a tour of the lovely island, we were left to our own devices. We took a leisurely stroll, walking through the natural pathways under the trees, and relaxed over fruit sorbets. I decided to back swim to Kanuhura, while my family took the boat back. It was exhilarating to see the hundreds of fish and beautiful corals in the water. Though this is only a distance of 500 metres, I don't recommend it if you're not a strong swimmer. I must admit I was a little scared tackling the 15% current that seemed bent on pulling me towards the deep ocean.

An afternoon at the spa is a must – nothing is as rejuvenating as an Amnawa or Theyo Demun massage in those serene, tranquil surroundings. Suitably refreshed by the gentle pummelling, we decided to spend time at the water sports centre. The banana boat ride was fun - our team of three adults and two kids promptly toppled into the water and getting back into the boat was an ordeal, till we realised the trick was to maintain perfect balance. The funtoom was another great experience - a flat boat where you lie down and hold the ropes, and are then pulled over the waves by the speed boat.

As evening fell the magic of the beautiful resort deepened. A sunset cruise complete with champagne and aperitifs set the mood, and the lilting music added to it. Cocktails at the beach followed; the setting was memorable - the soothing sound of waves, flickering candles, huge plantation chairs, and attentive staff making sure everything was as perfect as possible. The Kanuhura team deserves a thumbs up for their fabulous hospitality and service.

A fitting finale to a leisurely agenda is dinner at one of the restaurants. The attractive Olive Tree offers a la carte Mediterranean and Italian cuisine; the Veli Café on the beachside terrace offers Japanese and Thai cuisine; Thin Rah is a family restaurant and serves up a wide spread multi cuisine buffet including the familiar palak paneer, roti, dal and rice! The cosiest place to be is the partly sand-floored Handhuvaru Bar with comfortable over sized day beds that invite guests to put their feet up over a drink.



MALDIVIAN VEG CURRY

Redolent with the exotic flavours of the island

Serves 4 – 6

For the Curry Sauce

- 2 tbsp oil
- 1/8 tsp coriander (*dhania*) powder
- 1/8 tsp turmeric powder (*haldi*)
- 1/8 tsp cumin seeds (*jeera*) powder
- 3 each curry leaves (*kadi patta*)
- 1/8 tsp curry powder, readily available in the market
- 2 each kewra leaves
- ½ tbsp chopped garlic (*lehsun*)
- ½" cinnamon stick (*dalchini*)
- 1 cup light vegetable stock

Other ingredients

- ½ cup diced and pre-blanchd carrots
- 1 cup pre-blanchd cauliflower florets
- 1 cup *okra* (ladyfingers)
- 1 cup diced and pre-blanchd brinjal (*baingan/eggplant*)
- ½ cup diced onions
- 1 cup peeled, diced and pre-blanchd potatoes
- ½ tsp salt
- ½ tsp black pepper
- Chopped coriander for garnish
- Plain yoghurt and rice for serving



For the Curry Sauce

1. Heat oil in a large skillet. Add the onions and garlic and sauté on a medium flame, till the onions turn transparent.
2. Add the coriander powder, turmeric powder, cumin powder, curry leaves, curry powder and cinnamon stick and sauté on a medium flame for 2 to 3 minutes, or till it gives out a nutty aroma.
3. Add the vegetable stock and simmer for approximately 10 minutes or till the sauce becomes thick. Add the *kewra* leaves and mix well.

How to proceed

1. Add the blanchd vegetables to the curry sauce and simmer for 1 minute.
2. Add the salt and pepper and mix well.
3. Serve hot with plain yoghurt and basmati rice, garnished with coriander.

The highlight of our stay was a dinner in the chef's herb garden. My wife and I were enchanted by the silence of the night, the gentle sound of the waves, the aroma of the herbs, and the melodious island music – the food was an added bonus. It was truly special. Starting with champagne, we moved on to Vietnamese Veg Spring Rolls and a Mint and Tomato Sorbet, followed by a Thai style Noodle Soup. Adding contrast to the oriental meal were *Dosas* with an *Aloo* and *Cauliflower Stuffing*, and *Paneer Cutlets*. Dessert was a surprise - *Gulab Jamuns!* It's the little touches like this that make **Kanuhura** so special – they do everything they can to make a guest feel at home.

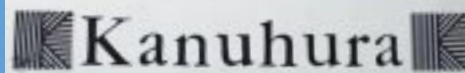
If you're looking to get away from the hustle and bustle of city life...paradise awaits you at this delightful little island in the Maldives.



Mirko Aru, Sanjay Dalal and Lusia Sakirow

Getting there:

There is a direct flight to **Male** from **Bangalore**, the other option is to go via **Colombo**. **Mumbai** to **Colombo** is only a 2-hour flight, add another 1 hour 15 minutes from **Colombo** to **Male**. From **Male** to **Kanuhura Island** is a 45-minute seaplane ride by Maldivian Air Taxi service.



(A member of The Leading Small Hotels of the World)

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