

S6 Maldives

Maldives is an island country in the Indian Ocean, South Asia, southwest of India. It has a total land size of 298km², which makes it the smallest country in Asia. It consists of approximately 1,190 coral islands grouped in a double chain of 26 atolls, spread over roughly 90,000 square kilometers, making this one of the most disparate countries in the world.

Most atolls of the Maldives consist of a large, ring-shaped coral reef supporting numerous small islands. Islands average only one to two square kilometres in area and lie between 1–1.5 metres above mean sea level. Although some of the larger atolls are approximately 50km long from north to south, and 30km wide from east to west, no individual island is longer than eight kilometres.

The Maldives has no hills, but some islands have dunes which can reach 2.4 metres above sea level. The islands are too small to have rivers, but small lakes and marshes can be found in some of them. Most of the islands are uninhabited.

Tropical vegetation of Maldives differs in the inhabited and in the uninhabited islands:

Inhabited – banana, papaya, drumstick and citrus trees by the homesteads, while breadfruit trees and coconut palms are grown in available patches of land.

Uninhabited – mostly different kinds of bushes (magū, boshi) and mangroves (kuredi, kandū) along the waterline as well as some coconut trees.

The temperature ranges between 24 and 33°C. Humidity is high but the constant sea breeze keeps the air moving. The Maldives experiences two seasons: dry and rainy. The Maldives is the lowest country in the world, meaning the temperature is always high and hardly ever falls below 25°C.

Tourism is the largest economic industry in the Maldives and has developed steadily since 1972. It brings a lot of foreign currency into the country and provides jobs for local people, decreasing the unemployment rate.

Due to its reliance of tourism, the economic activity of the Maldives is greatly affected by any climate changes. There are fears that due to rising sea levels, the entire country could be submerged by 2100, therefore, the government has made a decision to fight the problem with geoengineering projects which includes building new islands.