

## MALDIVES

16<sup>th</sup> - 29<sup>th</sup> October 2018 (13 nights) | Max. \$3,490 per person\*



**MANTA PASSION TRIPS:** Are you obsessed with mantas? Do you never tire of diving with these gentle giants? Does your heart beat faster every time a manta swims above your head? Do you dream about spending hours and hours with these majestic creatures, while actively helping protect them and learn more about their mysterious lives? Then this expedition is **MADE FOR YOU!**



### THE EXPEDITION

This expedition has been specifically designed for people who are **IN LOVE** with manta rays, and are eager to see as much of them as possible! The trip is timed to coincide with the most productive monsoon winds and lunar currents, which strongly influence the movements and feeding habits of reef manta rays. The aim of this trip is to use the knowledge of Manta Trust experts to find feeding aggregations, and allow guests to experience the wonder of immersing themselves amongst a feeding-frenzy of these gentle giants.

Differing from other Manta Expeditions, on this trip we aim to dive almost exclusively with mantas, carrying out long surveys on both cleaning and feeding sites in order to gather novel in-depth data on site utilisation, cleaning and feeding behaviour.



**Predicted route around the north & central atolls.**

Baa Atoll is off the main route for the majority of dive liveaboards. We will venture into this more northern atoll for a few days specifically to seek out the spectacular feeding mantas of Hanifaru Bay (and hopefully a few whale sharks as well!). To see one of the world's largest fish feeding amongst dozens of one of the world's largest rays is something most people will never forget.

On this particular expedition we will venture even further north into Raa, Noonu and Shaviyani Atolls. Here we will conduct surface and in-water surveys, with the aim of identifying new manta aggregation sites whilst gathering critical data on the mantas inhabiting these remote atolls, of which very little is currently known.

Ari Atoll hosts the second largest manta population in the country, and we will have chances of finding both manta feeding and cleaning aggregations. The highlight of this atoll is the opportunity of swimming with mantas feeding at night within one of the local lagoons. While the weather in the Maldives at this time of the year is likely to be more variable, these monsoonal conditions are exactly what create the planktonic blooms upon which the mantas and whale sharks aggregate to feed. Furthermore, we can never guarantee these natural events, but we have put together a trip which maximises our chances of being in the right place at the right time, guided by the expertise of one of the Manta Trust's Project Leaders, Niv Froman.

### CITIZEN SCIENCE - GET INVOLVED!

On this expedition, you'll have the opportunity to experience and participate in cutting-edge conservation research to protect one of the ocean's most majestic animals. Manta Trust scientists will be collecting **photographic identification images** of all mantas encountered throughout the expedition - a task that guests are welcome and encouraged to participate in. All new manta rays will be added to the database and **guests will be invited to name these new mantas.**

Every manta sighting is crucial information in developing effective management and conservation strategies for these increasingly vulnerable animals.

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### NIV FROMAN (TRIP LEADER)

Niv has been passionate about nature for as long as he can remember. His dream has always been to live in close contact with the world's wild places and to try to understand their fascinating mysteries. After graduating summa cum laude with a degree in Natural Sciences from the University of Milan, Niv completed a Masters degree in Environmental Management, focusing primarily on animal behaviour and evolution.



In 2010, Niv started working as a marine biologist in the Maldives, an experience that brought him closer to marine life and developed his passion for the underwater world. Building on his background as a professional swimmer, Niv quickly became a proficient freediver and qualified as a Dive Master.

Following his first encounters with the Maldivian manta rays, their complex and poorly understood behaviour drove his desire to learn more about these majestic animals and work to aid in their conservation. It was this drive that brought Niv to the Manta Trust, with whom he worked as the Project Leader for the Maldivian Manta Ray Project from 2013 to 2017.

In 2017 Niv moved on to lead a new research project and conduct his PhD on the reef manta population in the Chagos archipelago – a part of the British Indian Ocean Territory. In his new role Niv will collaborate with many biologists and research institutions to further our understanding of manta foraging ecology and movements in this super-sized marine protected area. This information will be critical to further the species' conservation measures both in Chagos and on a global scale.

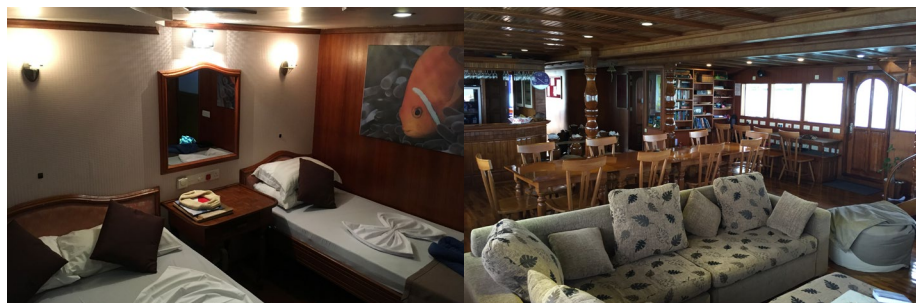
Throughout the expedition, Niv will be providing lectures and informal talks on manta ray and whale shark research and conservation. In addition, Niv will conduct general presentations on marine biology, with a focus on the diverse and productive marine ecosystems of the Republic of Maldives.



### THE MANTA TRUST

A UK registered charity, the Trust's mission is to advance the worldwide conservation of manta rays and their habitat through robust science and research, by raising awareness and providing education, influence and action. The Manta Trust was formed in 2011 to co-ordinate global research and conservation efforts for these amazing animals, their close relatives and their habitat.

**Data Collection:** The Manta Trust has a number of research projects worldwide, incorporating population data, research on manta movements, and genetic analyses - to name a few - in order to better understand the general ecology of manta and mobula rays.



### THE BOAT | M/Y CONTE MAX | LUXURY & WELLBEING

Back in 2004, the Maldives did not offer many boats that boasted the same comfort and standard for non-divers as the country's various island resorts. With the launch of the Conte Max that year, the concept of a cruise that combines the rejuvenating experience of diving in the Maldives, with the wellbeing of an on-board ayurvedic spa, was born.

Since its launch, the Conte Max has become one of the best-known and best-loved boats amongst those that regularly visit the Maldives. At 33m (108 ft) in length, she offers eight elegant and comfortable cabins, each with their own spacious en-suite bathroom and air-conditioning.

Scuba diving excursions are delivered by a traditional Maldivian *dhoni* that accompanies the main vessel. If taking a break from the underwater world, the Conte Max offers three sundecks, a bar, two restaurants, onboard WiFi, and TV + CD/DVD player facilities, with a wide-collection of music and movies on offer to help you relax. And of course, there is the Massage Centre, with an onboard Indian masseur offering Ayurvedic treatments to help you unwind.

### BOOKING

To reserve your place on this special Maldives 'Manta Passion' expedition, please send an email to Conny Bretz via [expeditions@mantatruster.org](mailto:expeditions@mantatruster.org).

Payment and booking for this trip will be handled directly by Conny and Manta Expeditions. Trip costs for this 10-night expedition includes transfers from Malé, full board and three dives / snorkelling excursions per day.

\* Price excludes USD\$20 Entry Fee to be paid locally when entering the Hanifaru Bay Marine Protected Area.

\*\*This trip will include a minimum of 13 people, and a max. of 16. The trip price will be reduced according to the number of guests, to a minimum of approximately USD \$3,100 with 16 guests.