

## Maldives signs MOU with Qatar Airways to increase flights

- A Monitor Desk Report

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Maldives Marketing and Public Relations Corporation (MMPRC / Visit Maldives) and Qatar Airways have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) aimed at increasing inbound air traffic to the Maldives through several joint efforts and individual campaigns.

The MOU was signed at the Qatar Airways Stand, on the sidelines of the Arabian Travel Market (ATM) on 9th of May 2022, at the Dubai World Trade Center. The MOU was signed on behalf of MMPRC by the Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director of MMPRC, Mr Thoyyib Mohamed, and by Mr. Thierry Antinori, Chief Commercial Officer of Qatar Airways.

As per the agreement, both partners would launch joint promotional and marketing activities in key identified markets, with the overarching objective of increasing

inbound air traffic to Maldives. The activities include launching joint B2B and B2C campaigns, organizing familiarization trips for travel partners and media influencers, and working on joint activities with trade partners. The MOU further stipulates aligning on future plans, with both parties assessing and contributing in order to implement the activities within the target markets to promote the Maldives as a travel destination.

Mr Thoyyib had previously commented on the vital role aviation plays in the tourism sector, especially in the Maldives. Speaking at a panel discussion held during the 9th Arab Aviation Summit in Dubai earlier this year, Thoyyib noted that the tourism and the aviation industry should work closely together to overcome challenges. He had also referred to the important role the Middle East plays as a growing source market for the Maldives, as well as the central hub for a large number of tourists. There are over 35 international airlines operating flights to the Maldives, including leading Middle Eastern airlines such as Emirates Airlines, Qatar Airways, Fly Dubai, Etihad Airways, and Gulf Air on a regular basis. Maldives has recently eased travel restrictions imposed on tourists which enforced presenting of negative PCR tests by all travelers. In this regard, from 4th March 2022, tourists visiting Maldives are no longer required to present a Covid-19 PCR negative result upon arrival if the prescribed doses of vaccine are completed 14 days prior to date of arrival. As of 13th March 2022, the Maldives has also lifted the national public health emergency, imposed in response to the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic. The ease of travel restrictions and measures would make it easier for tourists to visit the Maldives. MMPRC is currently representing the Maldives at ATM 2022, the leading global event for the inbound and outbound travel industry in the Middle East. For the last twenty-eight years, their annual event has connected products and destinations from around the world with buyers and travel trade visitors. It aims to support the travel industry and facilitate important business connections.

MMPRC carried out 260 different marketing activities in 22 global markets last year, including fairs, outdoor advertising, roadshows, familiarization trips, marketing campaigns, webinars, and interviews. The greatest testament to the success of these activities came late last year, as the Maldives secured the title of 'World's Leading Destination' (among several other accolades) at the 2021 World Travel Awards, globally recognised as the hallmark of industry excellence. This is the second consecutive year that the Maldives had successfully earned this prestigious title, a shining testimony of the trust placed in the 'magic of Maldivian hospitality' by travelers from all over the globe.

This year also celebrates an exceptional year to visit the Maldives – the Golden Jubilee celebration of tourism in the Maldives kicked off earlier last year with plans to conduct new and exciting activities throughout the year.

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