



conrad-maldives

4/14/2024

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Cruising Review

Conrad Maldives Resort and Spa: Not a \$50,000 experience.

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Conrad Maldives Resort and Spa: Not a \$50,000 experience. Resort review and experience in the Maldives. Avoid General Manager Ruzza. Double check for overbilling and other issues.

PDF Version of the webpage (first pages)

<https://cruisingreview.com/resorts/conrad-maldives.html>

Conrad Maldives - Price shock or value experience ?

Review of: Sunset Suite 349

The Conrad Maldives is one of three Hilton Signature Properties in the Maldives. The newest is Waldorf Astoria near Male (which is where we recommend to stay).

Updated on 11 January 2021. #conrad #conradmaldives #luxurytravel #maldives

4/14/2024

Reviewer Note for Conrad Maldives

Cruising Review provides factual reviews. If a guest experience goes wrong, we try to work with the hotel staff to remedy the poor experience. We do this to encourage systematic change (we don't do it for free stays, points, or any reimbursement). We are very transparent in our reviews, and hope you appreciate that, since your time and money are valuable assets. Most travelers have limited time, and want to spend it enjoying the experience, not dealing with resort issues.

This is the second review I have posted (TripAdvisor only lets you delete older post to post an update). It's been many weeks after my stay, and I'm still addressing resort and service issues. I've downgraded my ranking to the lowest, until the General Manager and upper management staff have addressed the issues. Specifically, the issues are listed in the Up-selling and Service Product Shorting area below. They have not attempted to fix the problems presented.

Checklist: Cruising Review will develop a checklist that new guests can present to the staff, to insure a excellent experience. We hope to have this available in the next few days, while we wait for the General Manager (Mr. Ruzza) to confirm that they also have a checklist for incoming guests.

Review Update July 2020

I finally got my points, but unfortunately I don't think any of my suggestions were actually reviewed and taken seriously. I never heard any further communication from the resort General Manager Stefano Ruzza. I suggest avoiding this resort and instead enjoying the newer resort at the Waldorf Astoria Maldives.

January 2020 Update Points Fiasco

Recommendations on How to Improve Customer Experience: I suggest that the front office stay and management (manager and operations) read the book, Extreme Ownership (available on Amazon). The lack of attention to details can easily be remedied by using checklists, and throwing out whatever software they have now for organizing, and move to Filemaker ([filemaker.com](https://www.filemaker.com)). Most of the hassles I encountered could have easily be prevented, if someone cared to take the time to do so. Instead, now we all have to endure lots of emails, and wasted time (the travelers most valued resource). Instead of leaving the resort with a positive experience, I'm now regretting spending \$50,000 (USD) of hard earned money. Unfortunately, the negative experience is continuing. Hopefully the Conrad Maldives upper management can learn from these unfortunate guest experiences, so others can avoid them.

Snapshot Overview of Resort

Snapshot Quick Overview of: The Conrad Maldives is one of three Hilton Signature Properties in the Maldives. The newest is [Waldorf Astoria near Male](https://waldorfastoria3.hilton.com/en/hotels/maldives/waldorf-astoria-maldives-ithaafushi-MLEONWA/index.html).

Restaurant: Mandatory Christmas and New Years (festive season) buffet charges. Expensive and not worth the price.

Dining: Overall food good to excellent. Poor vegan or healthy options. Limited variety.

Service: Excellent. Emphasis is on upselling at risk of guest experience.

Snapshot Dress Code: Smart Casual. Most wore flip-flops on the sand floor. Was nice to not have to worry about what to wear.

Breakfast: Included (huge wonderful buffet with sand floor in the main building). Included multiple ethnic food options and a juice bar (fresh juices made from your choice of ingredients).

Food Quality: Good. Breakfast buffet excellent. Room service food was excellent.

Resort Location: Hard to get to resort (30+ minute seaplane ride from Male airport). Huge time difference for westerners. Suggest spending time in Dubai or acclimating at other less expensive resorts. Limit stay to 3-4 nights, then try another resort, instead of staying there for a week.

Getting Around: Golf cart. Villas are a long ways from main resort facilities (almost too far to walk unless you are in no hurry to get anywhere).

Details

Booking Reservations: Resort Email mlehi.maldives@conradhotels.com is best option, or booking with miles from Hilton.

Muraka Reservations: TheMuraka@conradhotels.com

How To Get There: Recommend Dubai, then to Male from Dubai (4 hour flight via Emirates). We had a cruise which ended in Doha, Qatar (took Qatar Airways which was also a 4 hour flight). Pro Tip Emirates: Book direct via App or Website (for one or two people). Research and find the empty flights, book economy, and wait for upgrade offer which is typically around \$1,000 to business class (non-refundable if you change flights). You'll save about \$5,000 each way. For Qatar Airways, I was booking for six people, and used my Expedia account to quickly book multiple people (which was difficult on the Qatar Airways website or app).

What Worked: Service was excellent. Everything seemed to work well, but not seamless, and property has aged villas.

What Needs Improvement: Billing. Provide bikes for guest transportation. Full list of improvements are provided later in this review.

The Experience: Lacking experience for the value.

Wifi Experience: Internet (included) worked just fine.

Cost Per Day: \$8,000 For Two Bedroom Sunset Villa.

Summary

Lack of attention to details. Resort is showing its age. Villas are showing visual signs of age and disrepair (infinity pool was missing lots of glass tiles, wood looking very worn). On the plus side, they grow their own vegetables, have focussed on Panna and Voss glass bottled water instead of plastic bottled water, and look like they are attempting to be eco-friendly. The undersea restaurant and Muraka undersea villa are amazing, and priced accordingly (\$40,000 a night for the Muraka experience, but can be had for as little as \$9,999 without all the perks). Thank you Conrad for providing plenty of electrical adaptors (British plug to universal) so we could charge all of our devices. At The Brando, they charge you for adaptors.

Also, kudos to the wonderful Conrad staff at the Male airport. These guys busted their butts to get our group of six (with large luggage) on our seaplane flight, even though our Qatar Airways flight was over an hour late (seaplanes can't fly after sunset). They rushed us to our seaplane, and we were on our way, while other guests at other resorts were stranded in Male for the night. I can't say enough good things for the Male Airport Conrad staff.

Ithaa Undersea Restaurant at the Conrad Maldives

The \$240 a plate lunch at the Ithaa Undersea Restaurant at the Conrad Maldives is a once-in-a-lifetime bucket-list item. Drinks are not included. At 16 feet below the clear aquarium fish tropical lagoon, the worlds first undersea restaurant is made from 4 inch thick clear acrylic (made in Colorado) that was built and shipped from Singapore as one 275 ton module (15 feet x 27 feet).

Overall Impressions

For the huge price, there was lack of delivery for the actual product (i.e. experience). Beautiful setting and service was spot on. But something was missing. The attention to detail found at high end resorts in Mexico could be a good lesson learned here.

What I have found from these older resort general managers is that they are stuck in their ways, and change comes difficult.

I have seen the same thing at The Brando in Tahiti, where the older general manager has his way of doing things, and doesn't listen to the guests. Suggest Recommended Reading for Resort General Manager Stefano Ruzza: Extreme Ownership, a book available on Amazon, that allows you to own your actions, and provide a better experience for others by taking responsibility instead of blaming others and doing redirects.

Observations

Compared To Others: Suggest staying at other newer resort. Conrad Bora Bora is also showing signs of age, but experience is so much better. Felt like the upper management was trying to suck out every dollar you had.

Check In: Smooth, except that all the information you provide via email, seems to be disregarded (i.e. you have to write down information at check-in, even though it was provided in advance via email). Seems to be disconnect between reservations and actual resort. No pre-stay information was requested for in-villa dining preferences, food preferences, alcohol preferences, kitchen/pantry stocked items (included), etc. Lack of attention to detail. Once I'm at the resort, I want to be relaxing, not filling out paperwork which can easily be done online, or in advance via email (which I thought I had done).

Issues with the Conrad Maldives

-There is a lack of attention to details.

-Resort is showing its age. Villas are showing visual signs of age and disrepair (infinity pool was missing lots of glass tiles, wood looking very worn).

-On the plus side, they grow their own vegetables, have focussed on Panna and Voss glass bottled water instead of plastic bottled water, and look like they are attempting to be eco-friendly.

-The undersea restaurant and Muraka undersea villa are amazing, and priced accordingly (\$40,000 a night for the Muraka experience, but can be had for as little as \$9,999 without all the perks).

-Thank you Conrad for providing plenty of electrical adaptors (British plug to universal) so we could charge all of our devices. At The Brando (Tahiti), they charge you for adaptors.

-Instead of using my Hiltons Honors account, they decided to issue me a new account number, so I can't use the points. Now after two weeks from being there, they are still trying to figure it out. It's starting to waste large amounts of time, but for just over 400,000 points. When you pay \$50,000 for a resort stay, you should expect the best.

-Management and the front office needs to start using checklists and throw out the software they're using for organizing, and starting using Filemaker, to get them off in the right directly. I also recommend the entire management and staff read Extreme Ownership, which can only help them improve services. We all want them to be successful, and have resort guests fully enjoy their experience, instead of dealing with billing, price, and other issues which could be avoided from the start.

Full Review

Stepping off the seaplane (\$500+ per person round trip), one would think you had been transported to paradise. The warm breeze and azure waters immediately invite you to relax. Unfortunately with the \$8,000 a night over-the-water-villa charge, your relaxation ends quickly. Lack of attention to detail, and the aged property, makes you wonder why you're paying so much. Upper management is courteous at first blush, but quickly to upsell anything, and everything. The resort staff is kind, attentive, and happy to work there (always a good sign for great service and a signature at Conrad Properties).

Full Review (continued)

This is a resort where you can stay a few nights, then move on to another resort. While the breakfast buffet is amazing (both in food quality, presentation, and service), the other food options are limited. If you want healthy or vegan fare, you'll find your options very limited. Food prices are expensive to outrageous, but about what you'd expect for such a remote luxury location. Ithaa, the underwater restaurant is around \$240 per person (drinks not included), and that's for lunch. Want to dine there? Might think twice about buying that Lambo.

Full Review (continued)

The over-the-water villa was spacious, and had a beautiful plunge pool facing west. Sunsets were amazing. The villa was aged, and showing it. The wood has the five (or older) year aged look about it, and lots of tiles were missing from beautiful infinity pool. Plenty of bottles of Panna water were always provided in the pantry, but we weren't asked until the last few days we were there (we were there almost a week), what we wanted stocked in the pantry (I had to request items). While there is a a-la-carte snack and beverage list, our pantry items were included. For \$8,000 a night, I expected a better selection of snacks, fresh fruit, flowers, etc. This is in contrast to the Conrad Bora Bora (my litmus test for similar experience resort under the same brand). The lack of attention to detail, became a familiar theme during our 6 day stay.

Full Review (continued)

Food and drinks typically include a 10 percent service charge, and a \$18 per delivery fee is tacked onto room service. The remote location of our sunset villa, meant long wait times for food, and golf cart transportation. We inquired about bikes (which are offered at most resorts like this, and at the Conrad Bora Bora) but none are provided. It turns out they get that request a lot of guests, so not sure why they don't provide them (would save staff transportation time and provide a better guest experience).

Full Review (continued)

There seems to be a disconnect between reservations and the day staff. I was charged a duplicate seaplane fee (\$3,400) on my bill, which was quickly corrected after I pointed it out. We were initially charged a mandatory \$480 per person festive days fee for New Year's Eve buffet (drinks not included), which I refused to pay (since it was not included, nor mentioned on my large paid-in-advance resort charges). They removed the charges. Forewarning, in all fairness, the fees are mentioned on the website for festive season, so make sure they are included when you prepay. Nobody likes surprises, and for me, a \$2,400 buffet dinner (for our party of six) charge seemed a bit outrageous.

Review (continued)

Kids Program: There is a wonderful kids program on site. They even gave the kids a tour of the hydroponics farm (I would have liked to see that) where they grow the resort salad vegetables.

Value: From a scale of one to ten, I give this resort a three (poor) for value for money spent. I should have stayed there a few nights, then tried the Waldorf Astoria for a better experience.

Dress Code: With a sand floor, you can wear your flip-flops, and smart casual clothes. It had the most relaxed feeling I've experienced at any resort.

Sunset Cruise: On a beautifully restored sailing yacht (we motored), you can experience a sunset cruise, dolphins included. The sailing yacht staff were engaging and wonderful to be around.

Review (continued)

Undersea Restaurant: The Ithaa undersea restaurant and Muraka undersea villa are amazing, and priced accordingly (\$40,000 a night for the Muraka experience, but can be had for as little as \$9,999+ per night without all the perks during off season). For a once-in-a-lifetime experience, combine one night at the Muraka with a less expensive villa stay. We did a tour of the Muraka, and it is beautiful, but does not have a beach, and very windy. The inside three bedroom space is immaculate, and well worth any price for one night (just to say you stayed there).

Upselling | Product Shorting | Service Shorting

This is a new category I'm adding, just because of the Conrad Maldives (not a honorary category to be sure). All resorts upsell, but the level of desperation is apparent with this resort. From my first email contact regarding reservations, management trying to sell me the \$40,000 USD per night Muraka Experience. Even after I got there, I was approached on a regular basis for upselling (versus the experience). We wanted to stay in the Muraka, but there was no way we were going to pay \$40,000 a night, when in the first email, it said the Muraka could be had (stay only without enhancements) for \$9,999 (plus 30 percent add-on taxes and fees). During our stay, the price dropped to \$15,000 a night, which was still way above the original email quoted price of \$9,999. Other than aggressive upselling, we found that we were not asked in advance on how we wanted out pantry drink and food items selected. Again, paying \$8,000 a night one would think they'd plan in advance. Probably the biggest annoyance (and huge time drain) was trying to get my Hiltons Honor Points. If you're blowing \$50,000 USD, you want the points. Due to miscommunication, I was automatically signed up for a new Hilton Honors Points account (without my permission), even though I provided my existing account prior to check-in, on both email and on the pdf payment attachment authorizations. I had to put in two separate requests after my stay to even access the availability of the points. I email responded to the new email account, that I already had one (before I left the resort). When the resort was presented with the request, they added 400,000+ points to the new account. This resulted in a huge waste of time going back and forth to get the points to my original account. Why is this a big deal ? It's important to stress that multiple accounts mean that you have to keep track of multiple accounts, and points expire in 12 months if you don't have activity. Whether or not it's deliberate, it's product shorting, because the reality is that you probably won't use one of the accounts, and then you're out the points. There is no mechanism to give away and transfer points automatically through your app. It has to be done manually, which can takes weeks (as I have found out). Again, this takes away your time and experience. It's called service, or product shorting. With proper reservation and check-in routines (using a checklist), this can all be prevented, preserving the guest experience, and eliminate the huge time waste for both Conrad staff, and more important, my time. I've already paid for the resort and experience in advance (keep that in mind). Now I have to spend my time during my short stay, and after the stay, to deal with management issues that could have been prevented.

Open Letter to the Resort General Manager

Here is the list of what I have requested Mr. Ruzza (the resort General Manager) to accomplish:

Good Morning Stefano, and Alexander.

I am about to update my TripAdvisor and Website review shortly to present the current events, with the caveat that if you perform the suggestions below, I'll upgrade the review to a 5 star positive review (if you decide to put in the effort to improve the guest experience - so that others don't have to endure what I'm going through).

I'm not looking for anything free or compensation for this ever-growing poor \$50,000 USD experience, I'm looking for improvement systematically. Hopefully that is your goal as well. This is a win-win for us all, and future guests.

4/14/2024

