# Patina, Maldives



So, where are we?

In the Fari Islands of the Maldives, 45 minutes in a speedboat from the capital Malé, which is around 11 hours from the UK, if you’re lucky enough to get a direct flight.

And where we’re staying...?

Patina, a brand-new resort that takes over a huge – 42 hectares! - man-made island meaning there’s a lot going on: over-water villas, beach villas, plentiful beaches and gardens and art installations – one huge building-size installation by James Turrell you can actually walk in - and marinas and chic boutiques and street food and a beach club and so many restaurants and bars you need never visit the same one twice… it’s a world unto itself.

What’s the style?

Cool, contemporary and drop-dead gorgeous. Designed by Brazilian architect Marcio Kogan and his Studio MK27, who usually do luxury private homes rather than hotels, the villas are all quite low level so that they don’t show above the trees, meaning, from the lagoon side at least, it feels a bit like a desert island, albeit with the odd outsize art installation on the beach. The Portico, the main hub of the hotel, is spacious and horizontal opening onto a pool that blends seamlessly into the sea with a beach bar, restaurants, lounges, all looking out to the water. Furniture is contemporary, the place is stacked with books and vinyl and the spec throughout is sky-high: even the cunning lack of door-knobs delights. Flawless but not intimidatingly so. And talking of style, Patina has its own menswear boutique – unique in itself in the womenswear-centric international resort scene – curated by London-based magazine The Rake, and you’ll want everything. Like, everything. Like… everything.

And the rooms?

Cycle or take a buggy down the tropical sandy lanes and choose between an over-water villa or a beach villa and find the same immaculate design in each. Basically glass boxes screened with what looks like driftwood on the sides for privacy, the front of the villas is wall-to-wall, floor-to-ceiling slide-away-able glass, meaning the sea is right there in your room. Step out onto a wooden deck with a ribbon of a private pool and an al fresco bathtub and a hammock strung from the canopy, all of which you look at from your bed. Grey sheets and sofas and ceramic floors give it a masculine feel with wicker lamp shades throwing shapes on the pale wood-clad walls with just an outsize photo of palms printed on recycled ply for decoration. Bathrooms are big and simple and stocked with Haeckels products.

Is there a story?

Sustainability is the story with not a single-use plastic to be found anywhere on the island – any plastics are sent to be made into footwear by Adidas. The extensive gardens come up with the herbs and salads, reclaimed materials are used where possible and they even have a marine conservation project helping to replace damaged coral. You can get involved if that’s your thing.

And to eat?

Well, what are you in the mood for? Portico, the main restaurant, serves international fare from burgers (including vegan) through pizza and pasta to spring rolls and it’s the same at beach bar Veli . Then there’s Roots with the most inventive and incredible plant-based fine dining thanks to chef Derrick Wales and – to balance it out – Brasa, a steakhouse. Add Farina for wines and cheeses, a Chinese restaurant, a North African restaurant, a blinking Scandi/Japanese restaurant, the Fari Beach Club, which focuses on fish and Helios, a Greek-style Mediterranean affair… and we’re sure there are some we’ve forgotten.

So, to sum up...

Everyone knows that the Maldives is the world’s posterboy/girl/person for paradise, but Patina has taken the barefoot luxury clichés and gone deep, meaningful and future-contemporary (in the Maldives!) with the design side of things. Gone is the over-water spa, in its place a serene modernist block dotted with huge square lily ponds. Out are the Tiki bar touches, in is sleek – but relaxed – design. Out is the national costume staff uniforms, in are smart minimal neutrals. And while we’re on the subject of staff… some of the nicest people you’ll ever have the pleasure of riding in a buggy with. We’d take some home if we could.

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