

# BEST ISLANDS FOR FAMILIES

## BEST FOR PICKING UP NEW SKILLS

### MAALIFUSHI BY COMO

This relative newcomer is a real asset to the smart COMO brand. Its sister hotel in the Maldives is popular with couples and this one is aimed at the next stage: parenting. At the kids' club, four- to 12-year-olds can grow crystals, fold palm leaves into parrots and learn Dhivehi (well, a few words anyway). But they're just as likely to go hunting for geckos or shark spotting, in keeping with COMO's new 'Play' philosophy, which encourages children to take charge. It's all about boosting confidence. For teens, there are plenty of watersports and desert-island hijinks plus getting down with dad at family yoga sessions if they (or you) are up for it. With shady gardens and plunge pools, and just a few steps from the sand, the beach villas are best for families. There's a natural, understated vibe throughout, and children won't eat this healthily anywhere in the archipelago: coconut, cinnamon and almond porridge for breakfast, lentil cakes with crushed avocado for tea. But really the joy of Maalifushi lies in its sensational spa, where parents are likely to disappear and emerge with a much higher patience threshold.

Which let's face it, means a marvellously relaxing time for everyone. **LEO BEAR Abercrombie & Kent** (+44 1242 547708; [www.abercrombiekent.co.uk](http://www.abercrombiekent.co.uk)) offers seven nights in a garden room from £2,225 per adult and £695 per child, including flights, seaplane transfers and breakfast



## BEST FOR STORYBOOK ESCAPADES

### SONEVA FUSHI

The original 'no news, no shoes' Maldivian holiday was dreamt up by owners Sonu and Eva Shivdasani (him a former Etonian, her an ex-Vogue cover star) long before anyone else thought of barefoot luxury. But this place is also brilliant at keeping everyone happy on what is essentially a 100-acre fantasy family home with a jungle cinema and observatory where kids can spy galaxies far, far away with Ali Shameem, the only certified astronomer in the country. There's also a turtle-spotting beach and an ice-cream parlour (Eva's cheesecake flavour is devilishly good) and a treetop, Swiss Family Robinson-style restaurant reached by a wobbly rope bridge. The latest addition is The Den, the biggest children's zone in the Indian Ocean. Entered through a tunnel, and kitted out with clocks and treasure maps, it hides an exhaustive list of fabulous playthings: a pirate ship, jungle zip-line, water slide, DJ room and hands-on kitchen. For all Soneva Fushi's thrills, it can also be a soothing balm. **MIKE MACACHERAN Scott Dunn** (+44 20 8682 5060; [www.scottdunn.com](http://www.scottdunn.com)) offers seven nights from £2,190 per person, in a Crusoe Villa, including flights, transfers and breakfast



## BEST FOR CHILDCARE COVER

### PER AQUUM NIYAMA

The clever Per Aquum group has clocked that the honeymooners at Huvafen Fushi may want to return to the Maldives with some additions to their party. That's where sister hotel Niyama comes in. Staff smile at sticky fingers, scoop up tantrummy toddlers and debate football teams with teens. The new island, Play, has at its heart a gleaming kids' club, run by an unflappable Scott Dunn-trained team. With circus-top-themed rooms, a marathon of activities, the softest sand-floored playground and a water park, it's a spirited hideaway for children, a refuge from the equatorial sun. For parents of smaller ones, the fact that the club takes kids from 12 months old is worth ordering another gin and tonic for. For those with tech-obsessed tweens, there's a separate games zone with Xboxes, computers and an awesome pair of simulator rooms: one for cinema screenings and one with kit for golf, shooting and goal-scoring practice. And, of course, there are the beaches, the snorkelling, banana boats and dhoni trips. There's not a chance in hell anyone will get bored. **ISSY VON SIMSON Carrier** (+44 161 492 1358; [www.carrier.co.uk](http://www.carrier.co.uk)) offers seven nights from £6,230 per family full board, including flights and transfers



GRAINNE MCBRIDE, DEPUTY CHIEF SUB-EDITOR, RATES THE IRISH ISLAND OF THORAI FOR ITS POITIN-SMUGGLING TALES AND HIGH-TEMPO TRAD MUSIC SESSIONS