

## LUX\* Maldives highlights on recent Underwater Festival



Maldives. June 15, 2012. After having announced the opening of the very first Underwater Festival in May, LUX\* Maldives completes the execution of the event on the island and shares facts and highlights which took stage during this exciting week.

To complete an already appealing vision of the marine life, the festival held an introductory course to free diving with Jean-Jacques Mayol, apnoea expert and son of free diving legend Jacques Mayol. The course, open to all-levels guests, consisted of two days with the expert. A first session of yoga and breathing techniques held at the Yoga Grove of the resort was followed by a full afternoon on a boat to practice the newly acquired breathing skills and exercise free diving in the crystalline waters surrounding the island. 'I felt part of a family since my very first day at the resort' commented Mayol 'the island and the lagoon offer the perfect environment to approach free diving at all levels'. The resort's guests joined the course on two different sessions and swam with manta rays and whale sharks during the boat trip with Mayol.

With a central focus on underwater photography, the festival was enriched by the presence of two internationally renowned underwater photographers, Junji Takasago from Japan and the French Pascal Kobeh. Diving trips to the nearby dive sites available to the resort guests became a magnet for experienced divers as well as brave ones keen to approach the underwater world with discovery scuba diving sessions up to daily photography coaching sessions held during the festival. 'I believe this was an incredible opportunity to showcase the underwater wonders of the Maldives' said Kobeh 'I often come back to this amazing country and events like this put a valid and positive light on the destination'. Kobeh was also instrumental to the promotion of the newly launched Fluo-night diving during the festival – a new diving technique which relies on the use of special torches and filters on the mask to see hidden fluorescence of the reef and the fish during the night dive.

Photographer Junji Takasago focused his coaching sessions on how to take the perfect whale sharks picture and his students successfully contributed to the identification of whale sharks within the database of the Marine Biology Centre of the resort, which now counts more than 170 specimens officially recognized in the South Ari Marine Protected Area. 'I was thrilled to join the festival and I am thankful to the resort because I was given the opportunity to swim with the whale sharks once again' shared Takasago at the end of the festival.

Among other prizes, underwater cameras sponsored by Olympus were given to the lucky winners of the underwater photography contest, rewarding the categories of Best Macro, Best Wide Angle and Best Original Picture. In line with a lighter approach to the resort holiday concept of LUX\* Island Resorts, presentations and evening screenings held by marine experts during the festival were organized at the resort' screen on the beach, the impromptu island cinema under the stars. LUX\* Maldives is set to organize a second edition of the Underwater Festival next year.

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LUX\* Island Resorts is a collection of premium hotels in the Indian Ocean where guests can celebrate island life and enjoy light living; it is the new name and consumer brand for the luxury hotels previously operated under the "Naiade Luxury Resorts" umbrella. The five resorts in the LUX\* portfolio are LUX\* Belle Mare, Mauritius; LUX\* Le Morne, Mauritius ; LUX\* Grand Gaube, Mauritius ; LUX\* Maldives and LUX\* Ile de la Réunion.

The remaining properties previously operated by "Naiade Resorts" will be part of the "Produced by" LUX\* Island Resorts portfolio. These resorts will continue to be known as Tamassa, Bel Ombre, Mauritius; Merville Beach, Grand Baie, Mauritius and Hôtel Le Récif, Ile de la Réunion as well as Ile des Deux Cocos, Mauritius, a private paradise island.

In a world where time is precious, each moment matters, experiences and emotions are more valuable than material things. The brand's Island Light concept is inspired by the nature, culture, flavours and wares of island life, presenting a true taste of Mauritius, La Réunion and the Maldives. Clear rather than cluttered, free rather than formal, spontaneous rather than predictable, LUX\* Island Resorts are simpler and fresher, lightening, brightening and heightening the island resort concept.