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Travel > Asia > Maldives

HOTEL REVIEW

Kandima, Maldives hotel review: Relaxed, family-friendly beach resort backed by lush jungle

From an art studio to watersports centre, there's something for everyone at this large resort, finds **Eva Waite-Taylor**

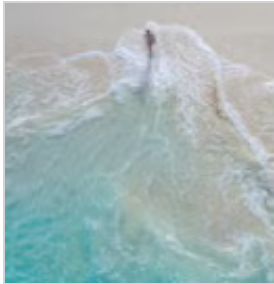


Thursday 29 February 2024 16:47 GMT • [Comments](#)




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Kandima has 264 studios and villas to choose from (*Kandima*)



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In a nutshell: A buzzy atmosphere, an excellent range of à la carte restaurants and a large kids club make this Maldivian resort a great choice for families

Location

Located in Dhaalu Atoll, **Kandima** is a large resort in the **Maldives**, and one of the more remote atolls. Transfer options include a domestic flight followed by a boat, or a 40-minute seaplane, which offers amazing views of the reefs and lagoons but does come at a price. The resort is not located on a house reef, so there's less sealife spotting than at other resorts, such as its sister hotel Nova.

The look

Instantly recognisable as the Maldives, Kandima is characterised by white sand and pale blue ocean. But there's also lush vegetation, which gives the resort a jungle-like feel. If visiting during the rainy season, **insect repellent** is a must as the humidity means the mosquitos are out in full force. The bright and colourful design means the resort feels more inclusive and fun than other luxury and exclusive hotels in the Maldives. It also leans into the fact that it's meant to be a destination for fun activities.



The bright colours of the reception set the vibe for the resort (*Kandima*)

The vibe

Appealing to a young crowd, Kandima is best suited to those looking to get involved in the fun as opposed to a quiet retreat. Owing to this buzzy vibe, it's less of a honeymoon destination and instead a great one for groups, families or couples

looking to soak up a lively atmosphere. Little ones are catered for in the form of a large kids club.

Bed and bath

Comprising 264 studios and villas, there are lots of accommodation options. Nestled among the trees, even the most basic rooms feel private – designed so you can't see your neighbours and complete with either a balcony or direct beach access.

There are sunrise and sunset beach villages – the latter don't have access to the sea owing to the current, which is not made clear during booking. The choppiness of the sea can be loud, particularly during stormy conditions. Both do feel like a private oasis though, complete with their own private pool and large, outdoor bathrooms. These, while novel and fun, does mean you're exposed to the elements.

Ocean villas are located on a jetty, and are quiet and sophisticated, feeling miles away from the busy main bar and restaurant. A great choice for couples.



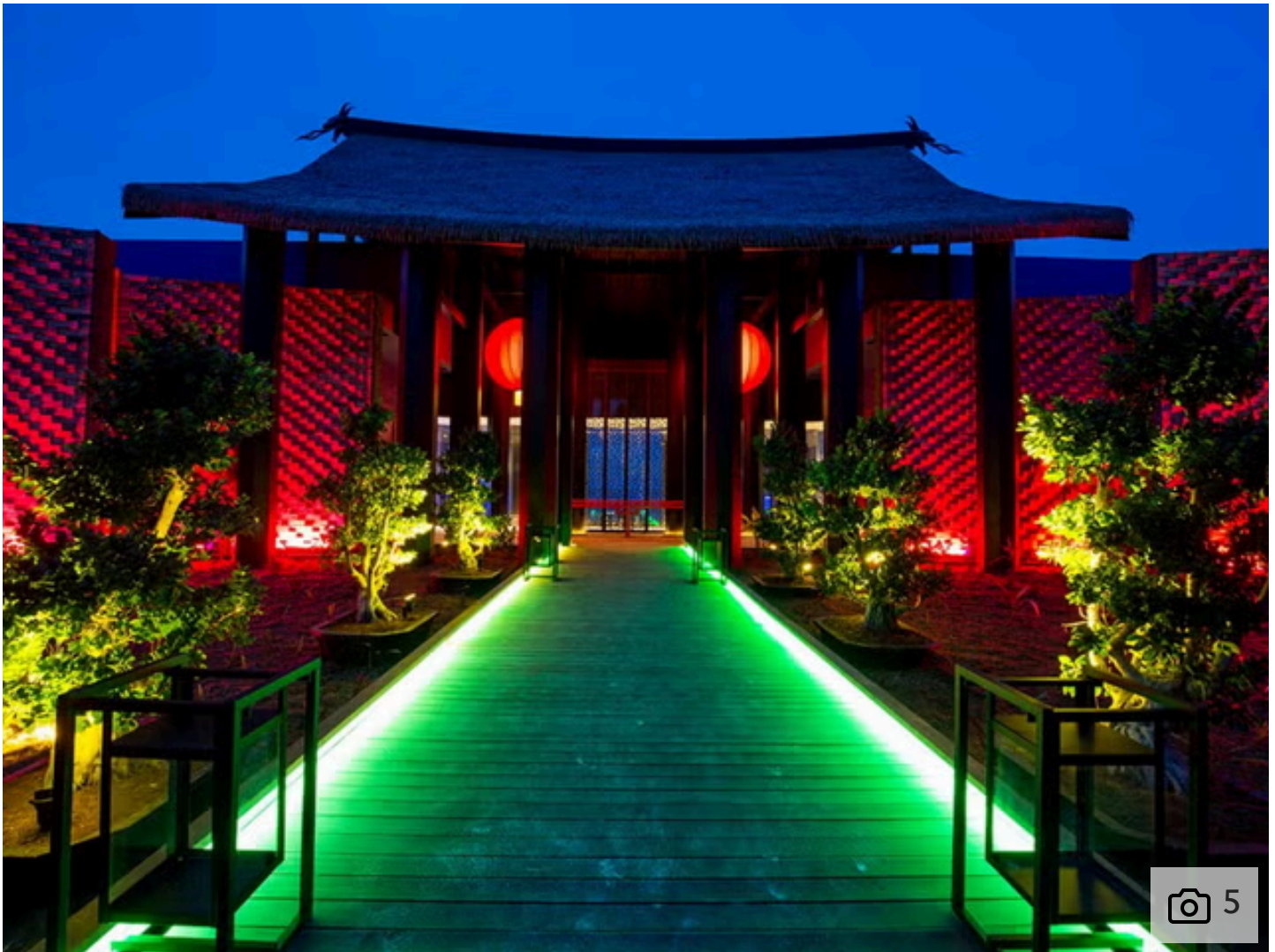
The sky villas are the most affordable accommodation options (*Kandima*)

Food and drink

Breakfast is a buffet served at either the Flavour or Zest. The former is the busy main restaurant. When dining here you really could be anywhere; there are very few tables outside and it's far from the shore.

Zest, however, is the complete opposite. Situated on the beach, there are sea views from some tables and it's a more relaxed environment. The extensive breakfast menu is impressive: think freshly cooked eggs and pancakes, a great selection of pastries, cereals, yoghurt, cheeses (don't miss the creamy feta) and cold meats. Drinks are self-served, including coffee.

Lunch is also a buffet service at Flavour during off-peak, and Zest is open in high season. The offering is extensive, with a large number of pre-cooked dishes. While I'd have liked a greater salad selection, if you've spotted something you enjoy at breakfast, the waiters are more than happy to serve it up at lunch too.



Sea Dragon's Asian-inspired menu was superb (*Kandima*)

What really sets Kandima apart from other resorts though is the option to dine at three different à la carte restaurants. First is Azure, a relaxed spot on the beach that serves up a Mediterranean-inspired menu – don't miss the beef arrosticini. There's also Smoked, a grill house offering fresh meat and fish. Finally, Sea Dragon, an Asian-inspired spot offers exquisite freshly caught seafood. Walk through a tunnel to the restaurant to find the fun, adults-only Forbidden Bar. All three of the restaurants offer something different, yet sensational.

Owing to the size of the resort compared to the capacity of the restaurants, the à la carte restaurants get booked up, so it's important to get reservations in as soon as

you arrive. While the food offering is impressive, drinks were often chargeable on top of all-inclusive packages.

Public areas

There's plenty to enjoy. Whether you're looking to partake in an art class in the studio, enjoy yoga at the fitness centre or relax and unwind with a massage (which incidentally was one of the best we've ever had), you'll be kept busy.

But that's just on land. The Aquaholics Centre offers a range of exciting aquatic excursions, including dolphin watching and snorkelling with turtles, both of which are led by an enthusiastic team who are keen to make your trip as exciting as possible.

To make getting from A to B easy, there's a shuttle service, but you can also rent bikes for \$10 a day, which I'd recommend doing as it offers a nice activity, plus the bus is quite slow. That being said the price does seem a little steep, particularly if you're there en famille. Walking is of course an option – it takes around 20 minutes on foot from one end to the other. After sunset, the main walkway is not well-lit.



The pink-hued main pool area has its own bar (*Kandima*)

There are two large pools. One is situated at the centre of the resort next to the buzzy main bar, and the other, at the top of the island, has a swim-up bar serving drinks until sunset. Both are kid-friendly, which is a boon for families, but the hotel would benefit from having one solely for adults.

Nuts and bolts

Room count: 270.

Wifi: Free.

Extra charges: Excursions, alcoholic drinks outside of package, and snacks in the day.

Disability access: Wheelchair accessible.

Pet policy: No pets allowed.

Bottom line

Best thing: The buzzy atmosphere and the impressive range of dining options.

Worst thing: Tricky to book into à la carte restaurants.

Perfect for: Families.

Not right for: Those looking for peace and quiet.

Instagram from: Beach next to Zest at sunset.

Rooms available from

£190 per night

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