

Presentation

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The archipelago is 823 km long and 130 km at its greatest width. The islands are formed into 26 natural atolls but they are divided into 19 administrative regions, also known as "atolls."

Every atoll of the archipelago is enclosed by a fringing coral reef that has a few deep, natural channels serving as entry points. Likewise, a protective coral reef surrounds each island. Most islands have a shallow lagoon, known in Maldivian as a "villu."

The islands are very small and low-lying with many being no more than two meters above sea level. Common features are tall coconut palms, white sandy beaches and crystal clear lagoons. The protective coral reef surrounding every island is also home to hundreds of species of tropical fish, countless shapes and sizes of coral sea shell shells and all forms of marine life.

The islands are formed from the growth of coral over long-submerged mountain ranges. These are true coral islands, with no other forms of rocks or minerals visible or within easy reach. As a result, beaches are covered with white coral sand with no trace of yellow or black as seen anywhere else in the world.