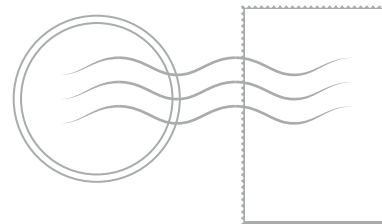


DESTINATIONS

WINTER SUN | THE MALDIVES

POSTCARD

Helengeli Island



Spending a sun-speckled evening on board a traditional Maldivian fishing boat leaves **Lina Molloholli** reeling

A refreshing breeze hits my skin as I gaze across this picture-perfect Indian Ocean archipelago, eyes drawn to the breathtaking sun descending into the ocean.

It's my second day at the Oblu Nature Helengeli resort and I am gliding across the pristine sea on a sunset fishing cruise, which is a feature of the resort's all-inclusive Island Plan. The Maldives has some of the world's richest fishing grounds – teeming with spectacular squirrelfish, emperor bream, snapper, grouper, barracuda and rainbow runner – making it an exciting destination for professional anglers and fishing novices alike. While sailing, we learn about the art of hand-reel fishing, which Maldivians have practised for centuries, skilfully using only a simple line and bait to make a catch.

Once the boat is anchored, the crew provide us with coiled-up fishing lines and a sizeable chunk of sliced fresh salmon on the hook to serve as bait. Although this was not my first attempt at fishing, my adrenaline instantly kicks in. Right now, there is only a tiny line, the sea and me.

After what seems like for ever – though, in truth, it's only 15 minutes – I feel a subtle pull, which escalates to a surprisingly strong yank. I'm having to hold on tight to the fishing line. One of the crew approaches and offers to take over my line, as I gasp in awe and riffle through my bag in search of my camera to capture this triumphant moment.

Following plenty of pulling, and just as much anticipation, up comes the line to reveal a – wait for it – bare hook. I can't help but chuckle. My fruitless labours make me look enviously at my fellow cruisers' catches, including an impressive grouper among lots of snapper and squirrelfish. My stomach will be thankful for their skills later when the resort's chefs transform our catch into a sumptuous group meal – a tasty end to an experience that's showcased a distinctively Maldivian way of life. **TW**



BOOK IT

Beachcomber Tours offers a seven-night stay at Oblu Select Helengeli by Sentido in a Deluxe Beach Villa from £3,195, including Etihad flights departing on March 4, 2024. The all-inclusive Island Plan includes speedboat transfers, unlimited use of snorkelling equipment, sunset fishing excursion and a visit to a local island. beachcombertours.co.uk



TOP: Maldivian fishermen at sunset
ABOVE: Oblu Nature Helengeli by Sentido

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