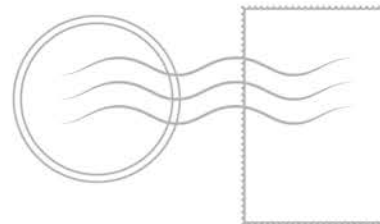


DESTINATIONS

INDIAN OCEAN | WATERSPORTS

POSTCARD

The Maldives



Laura French tests out the activity offering at the exclusive Niyama Private Islands Maldives

"Three, two, one – goodbye!" shouts the instructor as the parachute flairs, the rope jolts, and my feet trade in the safe, solid decking of the speedboat for the free, bracing feel of the air.

I glide slowly and steadily into the sky, rope tugging, legs swinging, as the islands beneath me shrink into forested blobs, ringed with circles of ultramarine.

I'm parasailing at Niyama Private Islands in the Maldives, and it's spectacular. For the next 10 minutes I float serenely along, gazing out over the ocean – a bed of glittering sapphire, rippling and churning in smooth, swishing movements – as my fellow fam-trippers shout and wave from the dot of a boat that tows me along.

It's the start of a rather action-packed day; Niyama is all about the experience, and an hour later I'm bounding up and down the waves on a 'fun tube' – a big, sofa-like inflatable tugged along by a speedboat that has us screaming and screeching with every twist and turn – then whizzing along on a jetski, heart pounding and adrenaline pumping as the shore shrinks into a strip of dazzling white in the distance.

Then there's sea-bobbing, where we're each given our own mini jet that hauls us through the water at speed, bumping over the waves and nose-diving down beneath them in a way that would make Bond himself just a little bit proud.

But the highlight for me is surfing. Niyama lays claim to being the only resort in the Maldives where you can surf straight off the shore, so it's a hotspot for surfing pros.

We're given a beginners' lesson on the sand before hitting a gently rippling lagoon to practise our balance on the flat surface. I quickly conclude I have none, but it doesn't stop me wishing I had a little more time to hit the actual waves at the renowned Vodi Point close by.

I make do with imagining I'm a pro though, and sidle up to the Rasta-inspired Surf Shack bar for a mojito (or three). Watching the sun sink over the sea, sky ablaze in fiery peach, reggae music playing from the speakers, turns out to be ample compensation for my lack of actual surf skills – and a rather idyllic end to an exhilarating day that I haven't forgotten since. **TW**



BOOK IT

A Beach Villa at Niyama Private Islands Maldives starts at \$695 based on double occupancy on a half-board basis, including taxes, based on stays from October onwards.

niyama.com/en



FROM TOP: Niyama is a surfing hotspot; Aerial shot of Niyama Private Islands Maldives