pcgn
The Permanent Committee on Geographical Names

Maldives

Country name	Maldives
State title	Republic of Maldives
Name of citizen	Maldivian
Official language	Maldivian (or Dhivehi) (*div[1]*)
Country name in official language	ދިވެހިރާއްޖެ (*Dhivehi Raajje[2]*)
State title in official language	ދިވެހިރާއްޖޭގެ ޖުމްހޫރިއްޔާ (*Dhivehi Raajjeyge Jumhooriyyaa*)
Writing system	Maldivian (or Thaana script)
ISO-3166 code (alpha-2/alpha-3)	MV/MDV
Capital city in official language	މާލެ (*Maale*)
Conventional name of capital city	Male[3]
Population / Area	520,000 (UN data 2023) / 298km^2

Introduction

The Maldives[4] lies in the Indian Ocean to the southwest of India and Sri Lanka. The country is an archipelago of over 1,100 coral islands of which about 200 are inhabited. With the highest point of the country lying at just 5m above sea level the country is at significant risk from rising sea levels.

Geographical names policy

It is PCGN policy to use spellings resulting from application of the BGN/PCGN agreement on the romanization of Maldivian, updated 2009. This system can be applied to Maldivian script official sources, or a romanized source can be used; for instance, the Official Atlas of the Maldives, Ministry of Planning and National Development, 2009, (ISBN 99915-9540-6) employs this system.

OneMap is the authoritative source for the National map of Maldives developed and maintained by the Maldives Land and Survey Authority: this is presented in romanized form and the names therein can be considered the best digital source: https://onemap.mv/.

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[1] ISO 639 language code

[2] Romanized according to the BGN/PCGN agreement on the romanization of Maldivian

[3] Maale is the romanized form. The conventional English form is Male, and this is sometimes shown with a tick following the 'e': Male' or an acute accent on the 'e': Malé.

[4] The country name does not include the definite article 'the' but in running text this is often included for text fluency. A definite article is often used in country names that are the name of an island group, thereby becoming pluralized i.e. the Maldives (< the Maldive Islands) or the Philippines (< the Philippine Islands); the article in these cases does not feature as part of the country name, but can be used in running text as in the usage above.

The US Board on Geographic Names (BGN) Geographic Names Server can also be used as a source for names in the Maldives.

Language

Maldivian, or Dhivehi, is the official language of the Maldives; English is also widely spoken (e.g. by most government officials). Maldivian is a dialect of Sinhala, one of the national languages of Sri Lanka; the Maldivian script is derived in part from Arabic; like Arabic it is written from right to left, though both short and long vowels are written in Maldivian.
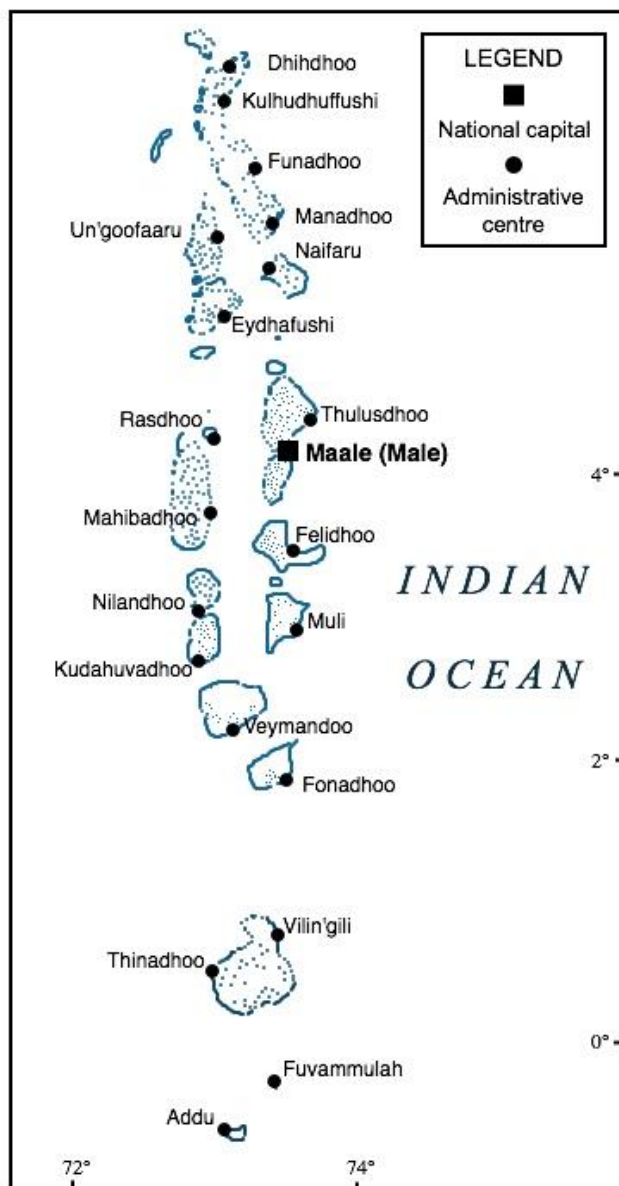
Romanization
BGN/PCGN agreement on the romanization of Maldivian, updated 2009, is available here. As both vowels and consonants are written and the characters are presented in a single, independent form (i.e. they do not join to others or change form), it is straightforward to apply the system consistently. The system is also published under the OneMap guidelines by the Maldives Land and Survey Authority: http://readme.onemap.mv/#features

Inventory of characters (and their Unicode encodings[5]):

Maldivian romanization contains no letter-diacritic combinations in addition to the unmodified letters of the basic Roman script. An apostrophe (Unicode 2019) can occur in certain graphic environments and long vowels are represented by doubling the vowel, e.g. /aa/.

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[5] See www.unicode.org

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Map of Maldives

Map produced by PCGN for illustrative purposes only, and is not to be taken necessarily as representing the views of the UK government on boundaries or political status.

Administrative structure

Maldives is composed of 18 administrative atolls[6] (*atholhu*) and 3 cities[7] (which amongst other criteria must have a population of over 10,000) at the first-order administrative level (ADM1). The ADM1s are shown in the table below as they lie north to south.

An overarching structure of 7 provinces, which became 7 'national administrations', was in place between 2008 and 2012, but these are no longer used as an administrative grouping. Contact PCGN for more detail if required. Administrative centres shown in the table are in many cases a 'capital island' on which the significant population of the administrative atoll resides.

Administrative Atoll Maldivian script[8]	Administrative Atoll Romanization	Administrative Atoll Code Name[9]	Maldivian script code letter	Roman script code letter[10]	ISO 3166-2 code	Administrative centre
ތިލަދުންމަތި އުތުރުބުރި	Thiladhunmathee Uthuruburi	Haa Alifu	ހއ	A	MV-07	Dhihdhoo
ތިލަދުންމަތި ދެކުނުބުރި	Thiladhunmathee Dhekunuburi	Haa Dhaalu	ހދ	B	MV-23	Kulhudhuffushi[7]
މިލަދުންމަޑުލު އުތުރުބުރި	Miladhunmadulu Uthuruburi	Shaviyani	ށ	C	MV-24	Funadhoo
މިލަދުންމަޑުލު ދެކުނުބުރި	Miladhunmadulu Dhekunuburi	Noonu	ނ	D	MV-25	Manadhoo
މާޅޮސްމަޑުލު އުތުރުބުރި	Maalhosmadulu Uthuruburi	Raa	ރ	E	MV-13	Un'goofaaru
މާޅޮސްމަޑުލު ދެކުނުބުރި	Maalhosmadulu Dhekunuburi	Baa	ބ	F	MV-20	Eydhafushi
ފާދިއްޕޮޅު	Faadhippolhu	Lhaviyani	ޅ	G	MV-03	Naifaru

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[6] The English word 'atoll' derives from the Maldivian atholhu.

[7] Some sources include Kulhudhuffushi as an ADM1 in its own right, but it is not clear in such listings how the remainder of Haa Dhaalu atoll is treated. In this listing we have suggested retaining Haa Dhaalu atoll as the ADM1 recognising Kulhudhuffushi as its administrative centre. The OneMap application does not include Kulhudhuffushi as a separate division to Haa Dhaalu.

[8] Script taken from an unofficial Wikipedia source and not corroborated from any official source. Romanization shown reflects the script given.

[9] Administrative atolls are known by a geographical name and also by a Maldivian-script code letter or letters. The letters are important, and we would suggest should be recorded in any dataset along with the relevant geographical name. Note that the 'Administrative Atoll Code Name' column shows the romanization of the Maldivian form of these letters, with the Maldivian letters themselves appearing in the Maldivian script code letter column.

[10] Each administrative atoll is also known by a Roman-letter code name as shown in this column. These are used for e.g. boat registrations and are included here for information but are unlikely to be needed for HMG mapping.

Administrative Atoll Maldivian script[8]	Administrative Atoll Romanization	Administrative Atoll Code Name[9]	Maldivian script code letter	Roman script code letter[10]	ISO 3166-2 code	Administrative centre
ކާފު އަތޮޅު	Maale Atholhu	Kaafu	ނ	H	MV-26	Thulusdhoo
އަރިއަތޮޅު އުތުރުބުރި	Ari Atholhu Uthuruburi	Alifu Alifu	އއ	U	MV-02	Rasdhoo
އަރިއަތޮޅު ދެކުނުބުރި	Ari Atholhu Dhekunuburi	Alifu Dhaalu	އދ	I	MV-00	Mahibadhoo
ފެލިދުއަތޮޅު	Felidhu Atholhu	Vaavu	ވ	J	MV-04	Felidhoo
މުލަކަތޮޅު	Mulakatholhu	Meemu	މ	K	MV-12	Muli
ނިލަންދެއަތޮޅު އުތުރުބުރި	Nilandhe Atholhu Uthuruburi	Faafu	ފ	L	MV-14	Nilandhoo
ނިލަންދެއަތޮޅު ދެކުނުބުރި	Nilandhe Atholhu Dhekunuburi	Dhaalu	ދ	M	MV-17	Kudahuvadhoo
ކޮޅުމަޑުލު	Kolhumadulu	Thaa	ތ	N	MV-08	Veymandoo
ހައްދުންމަތި	Hahdhunmathi	Laamu	ލ	O	MV-05	Fonadhoo
ހުވަދުއަތޮޅު އުތުރުބުރި	Huvadhu Atholhu Uthuruburi	Gaafu Alifu	ގއ	P	MV-27	Vilin'gili
ހުވަދުއަތޮޅު ދެކުނުބުރި	Huvadhu Atholhu Dhekunuburi	Gaafu Dhaalu	ގދ	Q	MV-28	Thinadhoo
ފުވައްމުލައް	Fuvammulah[11]	Gnaviyani	ޏ	R	MV-29	Fuvammulah
އައްޑުއަތޮޅު	Addu Atholhu	Seenu	ސ	S	MV-01	Addu[12]
މާލެ	Maale[13]	-	-	T	MV-MLE	Maale

[11] Most sources list this spelling as Fuvahmulah, but if the romanization system is applied strictly, the spelling with 'mm' is the result.

[12] This spelling is seen comprehensively, but the unofficial script seen suggests Addoo. Since there is the possibility of ambiguity if the strict romanization is employed, particularly given the preponderance of the spelling Addu, PCGN recommends using this more common Roman-script form. This is in contrast to the example in footnote 8. The administrative centre is sometimes seen as Hithadhoo; this is the main administrative district of Addu city.

[13] As noted above, Maale is the romanized form. The conventional English form is Male, or sometimes Male' or Malé.

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Useful references

- Atolls of the Maldives: https://www.atollsofmaldives.gov.mv/atolls
- BBC country profile: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-12651486
- CIA World Factbook: https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/maldives/
- Ethnologue: https://www.ethnologue.com/
- FCDO Geographical Names & Information: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/geographical-names-and-information
- ISO Online Browsing Platform (OBP): https://www.iso.org/obp/ui
- Official Atlas of the Maldives, Ministry of Planning and National Development, 2009, (ISBN 99915-9540-6)
- OneMap application of the National map of Maldives: https://onemap.mv/
- PCGN Country Names list: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/country-names
- PCGN Romanization Agreement for Maldivian: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1057654/ROMANIZATION_MALDIVIAN_Jan22_92_.pdf
- Unicode: www.unicode.org
- US Board on Geographic Names Geographic Names Server: GNS Search & Download WebApp (nga.mil)

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