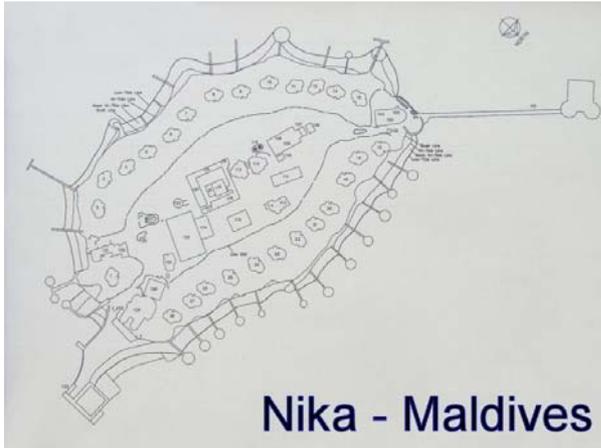


Wrong table

It is a well known fact that tourists have no orientation at all. Removed from their homes – to which they can find their way only after several years of training – they are completely helpless.

Well, one does of course not expect that travellers are able to find their way through Rom, Tokyo, New York or Greenbow, Alabama. The ability of reading and understanding a map is even for well educated tourists still more difficult than programming a VCR.



On Maldivian islands however you don't expect people to get lost because they are pretty small. On most islands everything is within 5 minutes walking distance or less and is very hard to miss.

Nika for example is a very simple island. Around a circular path are 28 bungalows, bar, reception, restaurant and a shop. Inside that circle is everything else: staff quarters, maintenance, tennis, badminton, diving centre and the Spa. Outside that circle are only private beaches you can't walk. Whatever

direction you choose, you can't miss anything.

The bar on Nika is the perfect place to watch the perfect sunset. While having Martinis and olives you just sit and enjoy the spectacle. In the very best moment, when the sun was breaking through several layers of nicely coloured clouds, beaming shades of red all over the sky, a tourist stumbled into the bar area, catching his breath, gasping:

"Aryurveda?"

The poor guy wasn't either very fit or he must have circled the island several times passing that big sign which advertised like a road block:

"Aryurveda Massage."

Left aside that tourists in situations like these are obviously not able to put communication to a higher level and form complete sentences – in whatever language.



Compared to Nika Cocopalm is a very big island: about 700 meters long, a hundred rooms and several paths through thick vegetation. To prevent tourists from getting lost in the jungle or to end up on a different island, numerous signs are showing you the right way.

The orientation problem on Cocopalm starts in the restaurant. When you go there for the first time a friendly waiter will bring you to your table, which will be yours for the rest of your stay. Happy to be there, satisfied with the excellent food, we memorised the position of our personal table and left. Unfortunately there were no room numbers on the tables.



Coming back for dinner, we first stormed the buffet, filling two plates each with extremely delicious items. When we approached our table we saw a British couple aiming there as well. Before we could become physical and fight for our own personal table among a hundred alike, we found out that we were all loaded with plates, we were not going to jeopardise.

Therefore, after a short but friendly exchange of arguments including the Second World War, the Royal Family, The Wembley Goal and the trouble caused by German towels taking the best spots all over the world, we decided we were all civilised people and would simply share the table, as it had four chairs anyway.

Well seated, chatting with our new friends about the missing room numbers on the tables or any other signs to tell them apart, we were suddenly surrounded by four angry Japanese shouting and gesturing with their fully loaded plates.

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