



MAKING WAVES: THE MALDIVES' MERMAID MAGIC

How Finolhu, a Seaside Collection Resort, became home to the nation's first and only PADI Mermaid Instructor Trainer

In the heart of the Maldives, where turquoise waters meet endless skies, a new kind of ocean adventure is making waves. At Finolhu, a Seaside Collection Resort, guests can discover the enchantment of mermaiding — guided by Mara Restelli, the country's first and only PADI Mermaid Instructor Trainer. More than a whimsical pastime, mermaiding is a movement that blends artistry, athleticism, and ocean connection — and Mara is leading the way in bringing this transformative experience to the Maldives.

Mara's journey to becoming a pioneer began with her love of the sea and her passion for teaching. Already an accomplished scuba and freediving professional, she was drawn to mermaiding for the creativity and confidence it inspires.



"Mermaiding is more than a trend," she explains. "It's a way to connect with the water, to express yourself, and to discover a sense of freedom that is truly unique."

Her progression to Instructor Trainer status represents the highest level of professional recognition in the field. It means Mara is not only certified to teach the joy of mermaiding, but also to train the next generation of instructors — an achievement that places Finolhu at the forefront of aquatic innovation. With warmth, empathy, and expertise, Mara transforms each session into unforgettable moments of discovery, play, and empowerment.

At Finolhu, mermaiding is designed for everyone — from curious beginners to confident swimmers. Guests as young as six can slip into a shimmering tail and take their first magical strokes underwater, while adults often discover a surprising sense of freedom and fun in embodying a mythical icon.

For newcomers, the Discover Mermaid experience offers a playful introduction to basic techniques in calm lagoon waters. Those wishing to go further can progress through the Basic Mermaid, PADI Mermaid, and Advanced Mermaid courses, which introduce dynamic skills, breath control, and even open-water mermaiding.



Each step brings not only greater confidence in the water but also a chance to experience the ocean from a fresh, imaginative perspective.

Creating moments to treasure - guests often book a Mermaid Photo Session, capturing vibrant images beneath the waves that become lasting keepsakes of their Maldivian adventure.

Whether it's a family activity, a personal challenge, or simply a chance to feel the magic of transformation, mermaiding here is as joyful as it is unique.

For aspiring professionals, Mara also offers something unparalleled in the Maldives: the PADI Mermaid Instructor Development Course (IDC). This advanced training programme equips candidates to teach mermaid courses themselves, opening the door to a growing international community and career path.

As the Maldives' only Instructor Trainer, Mara provides world-class mentorship in one of the world's most inspiring locations. "The IDC is not just about skills," she explains. "It's about passion — about helping people discover the joy of guiding others into this magical world." With its combination of professional rigour and playful creativity, the programme reflects both PADI's standards and Dive Butler International's commitment to pioneering, life-changing experiences.

Mermaiding at Finolhu is more than an activity; it's part of a larger story. Dive Butler International's philosophy has always been about creating connections — between people and the ocean, between adventure and self-discovery. In this sense, mermaiding fits perfectly into their vision.

By encouraging guests to explore the sea in new ways, Mara and her team open doors to a deeper appreciation of the marine environment. Many participants leave not only with joyful memories but also with a renewed sense of awe for the underwater world and a stronger desire to protect it.



With the launch of mermaiding at Finolhu, the Maldives has gained a truly distinctive experience — one that combines fun, fitness, fantasy, and a profound sense of connection. At the heart of it all is Mara Restelli, whose pioneering role as the nation's only PADI Mermaid Instructor Trainer ensures every guest can step — or swim — into their own extraordinary story.

At Finolhu, the Maldives' magic doesn't just happen above the surface — it unfolds beneath the waves, where everyone is invited to discover their inner mermaid.