



perspectives **sketchbook**

# cheval blanc randheli

→ The archipelago of 1,190 islands which speck the turquoise waters of the Maldives has transformed into a chain of exclusive castaway island stays. Now Louis Vuitton Moët Hennessy (LVMH), a French name more closely associated with luxury products—couture, cognac, and champagne—is joining the tropical jet-setting scene of coral-reef resorts in the Indian Ocean republic.

LVMH's budding hotel brand is staking its slice of the Maldives paradise with the summer opening of Cheval Blanc Randheli—a 45-villa resort spread between four tiny islands in secluded Noonu Atoll. Forty minutes by seaplane from the capital, Malé, the lagoon-laced hideaway is the work of Malaysia-based, Belgian-born architect Jean-Michel Gathy of Denniston International, renowned for creating holistic, harmonious hotel designs in idyllic tropical places for the likes of Amanresorts.

Gathy says the same balance between traditional materials and contemporary style—and synergy between the architecture, interior, and landscape—marks this retreat. “We want it to blend seamlessly with the surroundings, and to reflect and enhance the landscape. What is important is to create a sense of place and ensure the graphic architecture captures these natural elements. We have used what’s there—the landscape and vegetation—and incorporated this into the architectural and interior design.”

The sleek, loft-style overwater and island villas range from one to four bedrooms. Even the smallest among them are spacious, at 2,583-3,767 square feet, with soaring 22-foot-high sea-facing doors, lush private gardens, and infinity pools.

“Great attention has been given to the privacy of guests and ensuring a feeling of space,” Gathy adds, “with the lofty cathedral-style ceilings framed by handcrafted doors, and a strong sense of openness created by the continuation of the interiors into the outdoors through large terraces, latticed canopies, natural cross-ventilation, and floor-to-ceiling glass windows. Combine this with plenty of outdoor spaces and each guest has his or her own private piece of the Maldives.”



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