# Meet the New Marine Biologist at Outrigger Konotta Maldives Resort





Outrigger Konotta Maldives Resort has appointed Joan Li as the new resident marine biologist to take forward the OZONE (Outrigger's ZONE) conservation initiative. A Chinese national from near the North Korean border, Joan says her new job is a dream posting. Here she shares a little of her back story and tells us what resort guests can expect when they visit Konotta.

What is your background?
I was born in a small city in northeast China called Dandong. It's across the river from North Korea. But we moved to Shenzhen in southeast China near Hong Kong when I was six.

Being born and raised in China, what made you want to become a marine biologist?
I've always stayed in cities near the sea. The mystery of underwater life has always intrigued me, especially after I started diving. With a mask on, the beauty of the underwater world is revealed. Nothing can compare to the feeling of seeing marine life alive in its natural habitat.

Where did you study in Hong Kong?
Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. I studied general biology, including cell biology, molecular biology – and marine biology.

What made you decide to take up scuba diving and take your career in a whole new direction?
My first diving experience was a birthday retreat with my friend. After seeing how marine life exists in the 70% of the planet that we usually don't have access to, I just wanted to dive as much as possible. When I started diving in 2016, the underwater world completely changed me. It made me realise the possibility of having another life – rather than one in a laboratory or office.

Tell us about your experience in Malaysia and Philippines
I passed my first three levels of scuba diving at courses in Sipadan in Malaysia, one of the top dive spots in the world. After seeing countless jack fish, barracuda, turtles and sharks swimming freely around me, I felt spoiled. I wanted to find a place that I could stay longer to explore below sea. In 2017, I got the opportunity to become an intern at a marine conservation group in Philippines. I was diving twice a day, learning about coral reef monitoring, sea grass and mangrove ecosystems. I conducted my own research. I carried out more than 200 underwater surveys, which taught me a lot – more than any textbook.

What attracted you to working at Outrigger Konotta Maldives Resort?
The internship I had in Philippines was voluntary. In order to further pursue a career in marine biology and the diving industry, I found opportunities online. Outrigger had a position for a resident marine biologist. Working in the paradise of the Maldives was a very attractive proposition.

How is the Outrigger OZONE coral conservation program going at Konotta?
The total number of restored coral is now around 400 branches. Outrigger had already established its coral restoration project for three years through previous marine biologist Caterina. We're now looking to involve more guests to join our coral restoration activities as well as showing them the wonderful underwater world. Right now, we have 19 coral frames restored underwater as well as stone piles with new coral growing on them.

How can guests join in the conservation program?
Guest can join the Outrigger's monthly coral restoration workshop and marine talk to find out more about the mysterious underwater environment. Every Wednesday and Saturday I give free marine educational talks. In fact, these can be arranged anytime.

What educational activities do you have for kids at Outrigger Konotta?
Kids can join a marine biology semi-submarine, so that even for youngsters that don't know how to swim, they have a chance to see the marine creatures around Konotta.

For guests who can scuba dive, what experiences do you like to show them at Outrigger Konotta?
In particular, I'd like to take them for a night dive and have a look at the fluorescence corals under UV light.

If they can only snorkel, what can you show them?
If they can only snorkel, we have a group of stingrays always hanging out near the jetty. Sometimes when there's a group of sardines and mackerels around, baby reef sharks will be there too. I'd love to take the chance and show them how friendly and curious these beautiful reef sharks are. They really are portrayed in a wrong way in movies and TV shows.

What advice do you have for guests who love nature who are coming to stay at Outrigger Konotta Maldives Resort?
Just grab your mask, snorkel and fins and enjoy the blue!

(For further information and booking Outrigger Konotta Maldives Resort, visit outrigger.com for guaranteed best available rates)

###

Editors can download image of Joan Li and this press release in Word & Text formats at https://app.box.com/s/ik3rnmndjralmsxxhpqkfdljofaimdzp

ABOUT THE OUTRIGGER KONOTTA MALDIVES RESORT
A truly unspoiled paradise, the Outrigger Konotta Maldives Resort is your own private world surrounded by pristine natural beauty and unmatched luxury. Outrigger Konotta Maldives Resort offers a sense of complete privacy and remote luxury, surrounded by natural beauty. Set on a private island in the azure Indian Ocean, the resort features spacious stunning villas, all with private pools. Guests can enjoy a range of activities including, innovative dining experiences, rejuvenating spa treatments, and world-class water sports and scuba diving at our reef centre. The private island of Konotta is located 211 miles (340 kilometers) to the south of Malé and is conveniently accessible via a 55-minute flight from Malé to Kaadedhdhoo Airport followed by a scenic 30-minute journey on a luxurious private yacht. Visit the property on Outrigger.com.

ABOUT OUTRIGGER HOTELS AND RESORTS
For more than 70 years, Outrigger Hotels and Resorts has charted a journey of discovery – expanding from Hawaii to premier resort destinations in Fiji, Thailand, Guam, Mauritius and the Maldives. The privately held hospitality company currently operates and/or has in development 37 properties with approximately 6,500 rooms – inviting guests to 'Escape Ordinary' with authentic Signature Experiences and the Outrigger DISCOVERY loyalty program. Outrigger's multi-branded portfolio includes Outrigger® Resorts, OHANA Hotels by Outrigger® and Hawaii Vacation Condos by Outrigger® while also managing select properties from top international hotel brands including Embassy Suites®, Best Western®, Wyndham Vacation Ownership® and Hilton Grand VacationsTM. Find out more at Outrigger.com or visit @OutriggerResorts on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

Media Contact, Asia & UK
Ken Scott
ScottAsia Communications
Mobile: (+44) 7949 077959
Email: kens@scottasia.net

Anchalee Sriwongsa
ScottAsia Communications
Tel: (+66) 2 160 2644
Email: ann@scottasia.net

Monica Salter
Vice President, Corporate Communications
Outrigger Enterprises Group
Phone: (+1) 808 921 6839
Email: monica.salter@outrigger.com