



WORDS: MELINDA STEVENS, ADRIANE PIELOU; PHOTO: DAN KULLBERG

BEST FOR BOYS WHO LOVE TOYS
Velaa Private Island

One of the most expensive resorts in the Maldives is owned by 44-year-old Czech billionaire Jiri Smejck, who asked his villa butler at Huvafen Fushi to find him an island. He then hired a hot-shot general manager, Hans Cauchi from the Corinthia in London, installed his former butler front-of-house, and brought in 500 Czech builders for six months. The result? State-of-the-art boys' toys (not even glossy rivals Cheval Blanc or One&Only Reethi Rah have a Seabob or semi-submarine); a Clarins spa with expert therapists, an ocean-view sauna, snow room and snooze pod; a nine-hole golf course; tennis and squash courts; an extraordinary three-storey grape tower with a 6,000-bottle, AED 5.7m inventory (including a 1956 Romanée-Conti

for AED 123,400); and Aragu, an overwater, open-kitchen restaurant and Cru Champagne Lounge with a French chef. Some design elements are straight out of a granny flat in Prague: suede-effect giant-weave cushions; patchwork carpets; the hanging chair and three massive vases you have to dodge to get to the bath. But the outdoor bathrooms are quite wonderful, and four-bedroom villas plus top-notch security are great for those who must factor in space for the bodyguard and long-range-lens issues. Saudi's crown prince was among the first guests to arrive when the resort opened in December 2013.

NUMBER OF VILLAS 45
TRANSFER TIME 45 minutes by seaplane from Malé
Doubles from AED 7,000; 00960-656 5000, velaaprivateisland.com