



East of Flores, April 30 to May 10th, 2017

Trip Report & photos by Tommy Schultz.

Standing on the upper deck of the Seven Seas at sunrise on the morning of day two. The first colors of the day are glowing in the east, but the beauty of the Indonesian daybreak is completely eclipsed by the panorama of raw geology we're all staring at.

Komba.

The name itself has weight. An attempt to describe the indescribably huge cone of jagged igneous rock exploding out of more than 7,000 feet of cobalt blue sea.

As we watch the deepening glow of the morning, wisps of volcanic smoke drift from the upper reaches of the cone towering above us - easily one of the most dramatic views to be found from a boat deck anywhere on the planet.

And this was only day two!

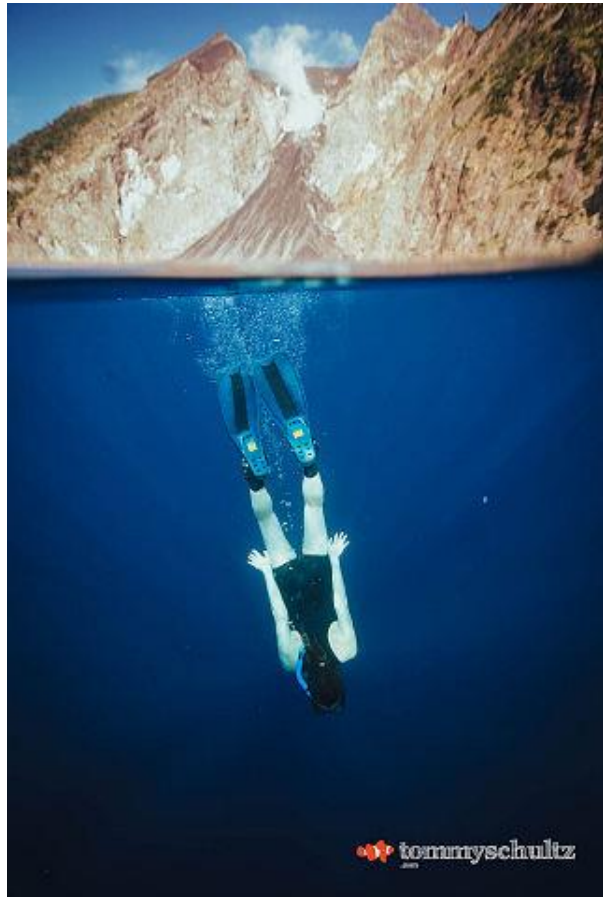


Every day we woke up to another gobsmacking view of this remote corner of the Indonesian archipelago. A place where few outsiders ever visit, and is home to some of the world's most beautiful coral reefs, animist mountain tribes, migrating whales & dolphins, as well as a village which has hunted these animals using traditional spears since the days before Magellan.

Choosing whether to dive or to explore the beautiful islands was the most difficult choice of the day, but the sheer variety of diving and snorkeling options kept us in the water for much of every day.

Each of our ten days was a different adventure, from diving a stunning, blue water pinnacle that was alive with a kaleidoscope of anthias and soft coral, to traversing beautiful coral gardens which were home to white tip sharks, to unusual muck dives where we spotted rare species of scorpionfish.

Our time in the sea was punctuated by very unique and memorable trips to shore - from exploring the traditional whaling village of Lamalera to joining friendly villagers for a thirst-quenching sip of fresh coconut water on an afternoon hike, to joining the welcome dance of the Abui - an ancient tribe on the island of North Alor. Meeting the local people from this diverse region was the perfect complement to experiencing the amazing natural beauty of the wildlife and islands of East Flores.



As one of the photographers on board, I can say that this was one of the most remarkable and unique photographic journeys I've ever been on. In fact, this first trip on the Seven Seas set a new single trip record for the number of photos and videos (more than 17,000 in total!). There's literally several coffee table books in the photos from our adventures, with aerial panoramas to capture the sheer stunning beauty of the land & seascapes, to underwater photos of the reefs, to portraits of the friendly islanders - some of my favorite photos taken over a decade of exploring the Indonesian archipelago.

From the moment we left port, it was obvious how proficient and friendly the crew of the Seven Seas really is - from Captain Wahyu at the helm, to Cruise Director Karl fine-tuning our itinerary, to the sharp-eyed and friendly dive masters spotting tiny reef creatures for us to photograph, to the kitchen and cabin crew making the whole experience feel like a floating five-star hotel.



Our ten days on the boat passed like a wonderful waking dream, by the end I was so accustomed to the daily rhythm of waking to the clank of the anchor and the morning chatter of the crew and then embarking on some new adventure that it was admittedly difficult to say goodbye to our new friends and return to mainland and the chatter of cell phones, email, and crowded streets.

I've been looking forward to a chance to sail with the Seven Seas for ten years and the East of Flores trip more than exceeded my (already high) expectations. With fewer and fewer wild places left to explore in our rapidly developing world, don't miss the chance to experience the magic of Eastern Indonesia with the best boat and crew in the world!

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