



Diving Komodo Aboard The Seven Seas, August 2016

Trip Report by Alicia Smith. Photos: Mike Scotland. Photos of Komodo dragons by Jan Soede.

I've got to a bit of a late start, but today marks day 3 of 12 of our dive adventure in Komodo aboard the Seven Seas. It's hard to sum up the immense amount of beauty in a few short sentences, so I'll give you a visual: Imagine being stranded on a rustic yet extravagant "pirate" ship in the middle of the sapphire blue waters of the Indo Pacific, surrounded by several lush, green islands. That's my life--for another 9 days anyway.

This is our second time diving in Indonesia, and so far I can say, without a doubt, it's the best. They offer 3 day dives, and for those interested, one night dive. The underwater world is vibrant, healthy and teeming with life! I can't possibly list them all, but some of my personal highlights so far have been the various types of reef sharks, large sea turtles, moray eels (I love those purple, creepy guys), redtooth triggerfish, the giant trevally, the gigantic (and I mean huge!) humphead wrasse, barracuda, and multiple variety of sweetlips. I forgot to mention the dolphins and mantas, but I didn't even have to leave the boat to see them. Crazy beautiful!



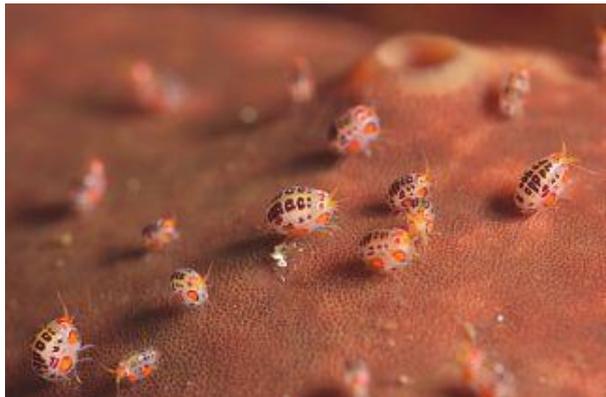
The entire crew -- and I mean everyone--have gone above and beyond to make our stay perfect and memorable, and they've been very successful in doing so thus far. Chrisye and Nico always start our day off with a smile -- and exceptional service! The whole crew have been so wonderful and accommodating that I've almost completely forgotten about my lost luggage (thanks JetStar!). Furthermore, I can't recall eating this good (or this much!) in ages. My only complaint pertains to

another guest; he's a crazy, toast-stealing Aussie that goes by the name of Vince. But we seem to have him under control -- for the time being anyway.

Quite simply, life aboard the Seven Seas--as well as below--has been spectacular! I'm looking forward to the next nine days, but hoping they don't pass by too quickly.

Day 4:

Black sand/volcano diving: rainy, cold & bumpy morning, but sunny & beautiful after 1st dive! Saw two cute and tiny cuttlefish; a few frogfish; juvenile emperor angelfish; anemone fish attacking Andrei!; yellow box fish; eels; large garden eels (on steroids!); harlequin shrimp; beautiful nudibranchs; orangutan crabs. Anchored by the village; watch the kids play & swim; adults work on various boats; lots of goat & water buffalo. Very relaxing & peaceful! Beautiful sunset! Received news that our bags are in Bali!! WoooooHoo!! Andrei was attacked by a feisty anemone fish on the 3rd dive; poked his mask several times, bit/pulled his hair & actually chased him. I'm sure he deserved it. My dinner had my name baked on it, and although it was to mark my vegetarian meal, it still made me feel special. An overall perfect day!



Day 5:

Back to Komodo. 1st dive was beautiful -- so many colorful sea fans and soft coral! Lots of bat fish at one spot! Vibrant colored nudibranchs, orangutan crabs. We spotted a manta ray on the way back to the boat, so we snorkeled with it! So incredibly beautiful. What an amazing way to end a relaxing dive!! Best birthday ever! In lieu of a night dive, we went to Bugis Beach for "happy hour" and to watch the sunset. Breathtaking! Karl overheard I loved Pearl Jam, so they played PJ music at dinner (which I loved!), the entire crew sang Happy Birthday to me in Indonesian (there was a lot of pressure for me to blow out the candles, cut the cake, eat the cake & share the cake!). And I loved every second of it. The chef, Totok, made a beautiful and tasty cake! I already mentioned how fabulous the food is, and tonight was no different. On top of all the wonderful festivities of the day, we also received news that Seven Seas crew got our bags!

Day 6:

1st day in Rinca. Water was a bit cooler, but the underwater life & topography is so different -- and still very beautiful. Per Karl, Jeffry & Irwan's suggestion, it made it easier to get used to the cooler water temps if you give a few good screams before descending. It worked -- for awhile anyway. Frogfish, mantis shrimp, so many different varieties & colors of soft coral & sea fans. Took the tender boat to the shore to get a closeup of the local Komodo dragons. Turns out they don't mind swimming, especially if they think there's food waiting for for them. Aggressive buggers. Big John seems to have a special relationship with one of the dragons he named Naroos. Naroos doesn't listen very well, but I could sense the bond these two shared. It was one of the most awesome things to see them in their natural environment! Also saw a lot of crab-eating macaques -- so cute! Got our luggage back and didn't know how to act. It felt like Christmas morning, and we owe it all to the entire Seven Seas crew. If it weren't for them, I'm pretty sure we still wouldn't know where are bags were!



Day 7:

2nd day in Rinca. This place is so beautiful we couldn't get enough of it! There's nothing like waking up and going to sleep with the sounds of the "jungle." I lost count of how many mantis shrimp I saw today! But the highlight of today's dive was definitely the Broadclub cuttlefish on the 2nd dive (largest species!). Our dive guides (all of them -- Jeffry, Irwan & Karl) have amazing eyes! So thankful for them because I don't think I would've seen one crab without them! Went and saw the Komodo dragons one last time this evening and got some great shots and videos. I just love these prehistoric-looking creatures!



Day 8:

Manta Dive in South Komodo! Saw 6 large mantas very close at a cleaning station; 2 all black -- beautiful! Playing & dancing -- very mystical. Spent 30min w/ them, and then saw two oriental sweetlips during our safety stop. Another dive group was also kind enough to provide circus-like entertainment on the safety stop as well. A human rope of 3 people sharing air while trying to keep the lady at the top from popping up -- but her fins were already breaking the surface! This craziness

took place at about 8 feet from the surface. Made for a good laugh (when we realized they were ok), but so thankful they weren't on our boat. The 2nd dive at the manta cleaning station was just as spectacular. The 3rd dive was a bit murky, but still great! Saw several white-eyed moray eels and a few giant frogfish, amongst many other things. A manta even paid us a short visit. No better way to finish the evening than with a nice, scenic hike down to Pink Beach for drinks and (of course!) more amazing food! Vince got in a bit of trouble tonight when he was caught 'sneakily' underhand-throwing a piece of cake towards the paparazzi's camera bags. He's a lost cause -- we're all convinced he'll never learn.



Day 9:

Back in central Komodo! Frogfish heaven; we saw countless hairy frogfish on the first dive -- one was a rare black variety and we were able to watch it hunt. Pretty spectacular! Some other beautiful finds were a cool "spider like" decorator crab, a 'dancing' slender pipefish, midnight snapper, several species of groupers and angelfish, and many, many others. It was a bit overwhelming to be honest. The second dive was just as amazing. At dinner, Vince (aka The Troublemaker) wanted to know when my birthday was; he guessed April. Didn't we just celebrate a few short days ago? I'm seriously starting to worry about this guy!



Day 10:

Last full day of diving, and feeling a bit sad. Got caught in a bit of current on the first dive -- we're calling it our "tactical dive training." Although we were holding on for dear life most times, believe it or not, we saw quite a bit: a nice size reef shark, a few large pufferfish, and even a blue-spotted stingray. We owe our safe return to Jeffrey -- he knew exactly what to do & was absolutely amazing. Thanks Jeffrey!! Karl didn't want to leave us with a bad impression of the first dive site, so we revisited it again for our second dive. Night & day difference! Very calm, vibrant, and full of underwater life. It's like we were in our own personal aquarium. Karl did a manta call by placing his fins on his hands, and it worked -- besides making my mask flood from all the laughter, along came a manta! Tonight we started a dance/singing party until Vince & Andrei decided to leave us to join the "paparazzi" on the night dive. But Kyle, Philip & Joleen helped to keep the party going. Although Andrei & Vince didn't see the mandarin fish (Mike & Sly did), the night dive was successful -- they saw two picturesque dragonets mating. The photos Sly took were beautiful!

**Day 11:**

Our last dive in Komodo was fantastic -- it was eel city! Vince bonded with a juvenile ribbon eel; after a good 5 minute streak of teasing & playing, they were both a bit sad to part ways. We saw a banded snake eel, snowflake eel, several longhorn cowfish, some very unique nudibranchs, Coleman shrimp, zebra crabs, a group of cool razorfish. In the afternoon, we had a very nice walking tour through Komodo National Park, and the dragons here make the ones we saw earlier look like midgets. Absolutely amazing!

As sad as it is to think about leaving tomorrow, I'm excited to start planning our next liveaboard with Seven Seas -- we will be back! Besides, I have some major dieting to do because I'm convinced that Nico, along with Chris & Totok, were on a mission to make me fat! And they succeeded. You all were the best crew and greatest company we could've ever hoped for. I can't possibly thank you all enough! Until next time...

Alicia Smith
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