

Special Trip BALI to KOMODO MSY KOMODO DANCER

08th-18th August 2012
10Nights/11Days **3655 USD**
ALL INCLUSIVE!!

Critters and Pelagics, U/W Photo Tutorial, Nitrox,
Airfare back to Bali,
Dragons Excursion and more....



Itinerary Bali to Komodo

MSY Komodo Dancer

08th-18th August 2012

Overview:

Stretching over 500 kilometres of Nusa Tenggara from Bali to Flores, the Komodo Dancer's area of operations is split into four distinct and different areas: Bali & Nusa Penida, Satonda & Moyo, Sangeang & Bima and the Komodo National Park.

The islands of Satonda and Moyo are at the mid-point to the north of Sumbawa and have interesting reefs, wrecks and walls to be explored.

The very different coral and critter sites at Sangeang Island, the twin peaked volcano are included as is another area that is gaining recognition, Bima Bay, where sand/muck diving is the order of the day. This body of water that leads to the harbour town of Bima on Sumbawa is shaping up to be a rival to the Lembeh Strait in Sulawesi.

Our main area of interest however is the Komodo National Park and that is where this document mainly concentrates with nearly 50 major dive sites and a lot more either undived or not visited regularly.

What follows is an itinerary for an 11 day cruise from Bali to the Komodo National Park stopping at some of the most famous and exhilarating dive sites in the region.

Day 1:

Arrival and boarding the Komodo Dancer
Benoa Harbour, Bali

Welcome aboard the Komodo Dancer. Lunch will be served shortly after boarding followed by vessel and diving orientation briefings. Dive equipment and camera systems can then be set up while the boat slowly makes its way north east across the Badung and Lombok Straits on our way to Moyo and Satonda.

Day 2:

Getting Started
Satonda, North Sumbawa

Located just a couple of kilometres off the north-west coast of Sumbawa, Satonda is an extinct volcano whose caldera was filled with water when the nearby Mt. Tambora erupted. It was the biggest explosion mankind has been able to measure up to present time.

The ridges of what was once Mt. Satonda are now covered in lush forests that support wildlife such as pigs and many Macaque monkeys. A highlight of a visit to Satonda is the sight of many thousands of fruit bats that commute at dusk from the island to feed on the mainland, returning before first light the next day.

The dives here consist of coral reefs and sea mounts with a good variety of critters to find too.

Day 3:

Critter Capers
Bima Inlet, Sumbawa

A day spent in the calm waters of the Bima Inlet. There are a variety of dives here from teeming coral reefs as well as prolific critter dives to search out some of the more bizarre marine creatures. Below is an excerpt taken from one of our recent press releases:

Most scuba divers already know about the stunning diversity, spectacular marine life and exciting dive and land adventures to be encountered in the Komodo National Park, Indonesia. What we are discovering now are some incredible critter, muck and sand sites that we visit to the west of the park.

Many of our guests are avid photographers who like nothing more than hunting out weird and wonderful critters on the reef, sand or silt. A lot of our divers have told us about the fascinating muck diving of the Lembeh Strait. Our dive masters already have experience of Lembeh so we set out to find our own macro mecca closer to home.

We have come up trumps at two locations to the west of the Komodo National Park - Sangeang, an island volcano to the north of East Sumbawa and Bima Bay, an inlet that meanders down to Bima town on Sumbawa. There are two specific sites in both of these areas that are producing a dazzling array of rare creepy crawlies on a regular basis - "Fuzzy Bottom" at the entrance to Bima Inlet and "Black Magic" on Sangeang. Both are similar in that they are slightly current swept, as is Lembeh, and while not entirely muck, they do share similar bottom compositions - fine to coarse sand.

"Fuzzy Bottom" near Bima Bay is a newer site. Looking fairly nondescript from the surface and not much better once you descend this place comes alive once you get to the bottom. Fairly shallow and gently sloping the sand here provides shelter and a hunting ground to some of the rarest cephalopods on the planet. Five of the "Octopus Holy Grails" are here. Of

the long arm variety Mimic's, White V and Wonderpus are fairly common and Blue Rings and Veiny have been seen on a regular basis too.

Apart from our eight tentacle friends there are zebra crab and Coleman shrimp in fire urchins, thorny seahorses, various ghost pipefishes, frogfish and strange looking puffers and porcupine fish too. Night dives here are a trip - battling crabs and shrimp fight it out on the bottom while trying to avoid the attentions of the other hunters.

Day 4:

Dive on a Volcano
Sangeang Island, North Sumbawa

We wake up under the gaze of Sangeang Api, a huge twin peaked volcano thrusting out of the ocean and one of the most active volcanoes in the Lesser Sunda Islands. Two large volcanic cones, 1,949m/6500ft - high Doro Api and 1,795m/5980ft - high Doro Manto, are in the centre and on the eastern rim, respectively, of an older, largely obscured caldera. Aside from the stunning mountainous scenery it is possible to see some evidence of agricultural work on the flatter land close to shore. Wild horses and domestic buffalo can sometimes be seen on the beaches here too.

The underwater world of Sangeang is every bit as impressive as the island itself with caves, canyons and mysterious reefs bubbling like champagne due to the volcanic activity below.

The island has some great black sand critter sites too to keep the photographers happy. Here is another paragraph from the same press-release mentioned above:

"Black Magic" is located on the northern tip of Sangeang, west of the lighthouse, and is marked out by two large rocks on the shore, left and right. The deeply shelving topography in this bay consists of black sand with coral reefs east and west, is relatively easy to dive and has produced seahorses, pygmy seahorses, Ambon scorpion fish, ghost pipefish, frogfish, inimicus, snake eels, stargazers, dragonets, sawblade shrimp, candy crabs and a whole host of rare nudibranchs.

Day 5:

Little & Large
Gili Banta, The Sape Strait

The large and impressively desolate island of Gili Banta is situated in the Flores Sea at the top of the Sape Strait, the channel between the islands of

Komodo and Sumbawa.

When waking up here the dry rugged and rugged terrain of the impressive north facing cliffs comes as a bit of a shock for those used to more tropical landscapes.

There is little in the way of vegetation on Banta save for a few sparse trees and bushes growing above the beaches. Majestic sea eagles make their home on the towering rock faces that plunge down into the deep blue sea and can frequently be seen soaring and swooping while on the hunt for a meal.

The main diving sites are situated on the north facing bay, on and around what is almost certainly the caldera of a massive extinct volcano.

There are two peninsulas to the east and west of the bay, both homes to spectacular sites; one a current swept promontory with breathtaking architecture, the other a picturesque coral reef.

Inside the bay itself, which stretches nearly five kilometers across, there are a couple of pretty white sand and coral head spots that often come up with unusual critters and are ideal for underwater photography and night dives.

The main attraction at Gili Banta however, is the much talked about GPS Point, probably the most unpredictable and demanding dive in the area, but so rewarding for those willing to face the challenge.

Komodo, The Land That Time Forgot

Komodo! Mention the word in company almost anywhere and you are likely to get the same reaction; hushed mutterings about a mythical, far away land dominated by barren sun scorched mountains and low lying primordial forests set on islands surrounded by dazzling coral reefs. The conversation would then follow that these islands are protected by the fierce currents of a treacherous deep blue sea and ruled over by the most awe inspiring predator on the planet!

And you know what? This description is about as close as it gets!

Welcome to Komodo, the "Land That Time Forgot".

The Komodo National Park

Established in 1980 as a World Heritage Site the Komodo National Park is

located some 250 nautical miles east of Bali and 8 degrees below the equator, deep in the Indonesian archipelago between the islands of Sumbawa and Flores.

Encompassing 1,817 square kilometers and comprising the three main islands, Komodo, Rinca and Padar as well as many other smaller islets and rocky sea mountains, the park is considered to be one of the most exciting natural world adventure destinations on the planet. Intrepid travelers here can experience one of the richest marine environments in the world; get up close and personal with the ferocious Komodo Dragons along with many other fascinating land and sea encounters and excursions.

Marine Komodo:

The huge island nation of Indonesia is home to the world's most prolific marine ecosystem and the Komodo National Park is right at the epicenter of all with wild activity. Most world class diving sites are usually formed by either unusual volcanic formations of undersea rock or extensive deposits of coral limestone, washed over by nutrient rich marine currents. Fortunately during its evolution the Komodo region of Indonesia has been blessed with all of this! This spectacular seascape is comprised mainly of volcanic seamounts, pinnacles, walls and canyons as well as fringing reefs, coral gardens, mangrove bays and sandy slopes; creating an unmatched variety of very different and distinctive dive environments.

Between the sea mounts the vast coral reefs, often in shallow water, teem with unusual tropical reef animals. In fact, this area plays host to more than 1,100 different species of fish. With a careful eye, even the most jaded observer can discover hundreds of new species of brilliantly coloured marine life, plus an astounding array of invertebrates, some of which have never even been properly identified yet!

The list of critter species is huge and new and unusual creatures are being discovered here all of the time. For fans of bigger animals the dive sites with stronger currents play host to majestic mantas, sharks and

many other larger pelagic species. Whales, dolphins and turtles have made the park a playground and even the rare dugong or sea cow can sometimes be spotted in the mangrove areas.

North & South:

The range of dive sites and conditions in Komodo are legendary and the northern and southern sides of the park offer two distinct underwater

environments. The Flores Sea is to the north and the Indian Ocean lies to the south and these two vast seas are connected by the Sape, Linta and Molo Straits.

Between the months of March and November the clear warm waters flowing from the Banda and Flores Seas wash over the pristine hard coral gardens and seamounts in the north while in the south, deep cold water current from the Indian Ocean collide with the continental shelf causing upwelling's that produce a vast plankton banquet for the marine life here. Between the months of December and February these water conditions are reversed with warm blue water lighting up the south while colder, greener conditions are evident on the northern sites. During a single day water temperatures can vary wildly between 30 to 18 degrees Celsius in just a short distance at some times of the year.

Fierce Currents:

Komodo is justly famous for its high energy adrenaline pumping dives and the gusting currents that surge and swirl through the deep channels around the seamounts between Komodo, Padar and Rinca islands and are the key to the parks wonderful marine life. These immense water movements produce such a wild variety of conditions that there is something here for everybody. Great visibility, massive cliffs of black basalt, sheer walls and dazzling coral gardens all combine to house one of the most prolific and diverse undersea ecosystem on earth!

Topside Komodo:

Topside, the landscape is dotted with islands and islets of every description, their volcanic bases have been carved by eons of ocean wear, but their crowns are distinctive and unique. While most of Indonesia is green and tropically lush, Komodo is much dryer featuring lofty rocky peaks, creature filled green forests and grassy slopes and meadows that give a savanna type feel to the landscape; the a perfect habitat for its most famous resident, the Komodo dragon, the largest lizard on earth!

Beaches:

The beaches of Komodo are a dream, sandy with a background of rocks and hills and mostly deserted. Great for trekking and beach combing but not a good place for sunbathing however, you have to remember what else lives here. Looking at the sand on some of these beaches brings yet another surprise, it appears to be pink in colour, and it actually is! The vermilion organ pipe coral that thrive in Komodo does not lose its pigment when it dies, it just washes up on these beaches and gets crushed and

ground up with the regular white sand and produces this remarkable candy floss colouration.

Wildlife:

While the giant man eating monitor lizards living here are undoubtedly the stars of the show, the islands in the park also support an impressive array of native wildlife, both in the air and on the ground.

Effortlessly swirling high in the thermals close to shore breathtaking hunting displays by White Bellied Sea Eagles and Brahminy Kites are a show not to be missed. In the wooded areas the trees screech,

chatter and hoot with Green Imperial Pigeons and Yellow Crested Cockatoos, and on the forest floor the Megapode bird, a close relative of the domestic chicken, can be seen digging and building their earth mound nests, and these are just some of the birds that make Komodo an ornithologists dream.

The two largest islands in the park, Komodo and Rinca, are home to many types of land based fauna too. Snakes are common, especially during the wetter months, and it is not unusual to come across a cobra, python or green tree viper during a cross country trek. Wild pigs or boar can often be seen rummaging around in the undergrowth or wallowing in a cool mud pool. Deer are plentiful while herds of goats are resident on some of the smaller islands like Gili Lawah Laut. The park also supports some huge water buffalo and many families of mischievous crab eating macaques although these two creatures are only found on Rinca.

But whatever or wherever they are, they are all just dinner for the main event!

Enter the Dragon

Imagine a 150kg, three metre long, armour clad monster with serrated ripping teeth set in immensely powerful jaws, four sets of razor sharp claws on the feet of each stocky leg. Add to this a wickedly whipping tail capable of knocking a full grown man to the ground and the ability to inject toxic saliva into its victims with each bite. This all sounds like something straight out of a horror movie, your worst nightmare, or so you may think. Living on the islands of Komodo and Rinca, and nowhere else in the world, this mythical creature is no bad dream; this is the awesome Komodo Dragon!

Many times during an expedition we get hair raising opportunities to get up close and personal with these animals while on treks on the islands - just

make sure that you keep a close eye on the bushes, around the trees and even on the beach, this apex predator takes no prisoners.

Jurassic Park

So fasten your weight belts and let's begin our epic journey around one of the most diverse and unique areas of the natural world, to a land of dragons and dramatic landscapes, fierce currents and sparkling corals in seas teeming with more marine life than almost anywhere else on the planet, a real life "Jurassic Park" above and below the surface of the sea. Whether you are ripping along the top of a sea mount on an electrifying current dive, poking around in the shallows late in the day or visiting the islands on a topside adventure, Komodo is calling!

Day 6 & 7:

Sea Mounts

& Dazzling Reef - Hill Walking & Drift Dives
Gili Lawah Laut & Gili Lawah Darat, North Komodo

Located on the northern edge of the Komodo National Park the Gili Lawah area comprises of two bays on north Komodo and two islands, Gili Lawah Laut and Gili Lawah Darat. The terrain here is rocky hilly savannah and the two islands support big herds of goats as well as the ubiquitous sea eagles and blackbirds. There are some very scenic hikes up onto the tops of the hills here and the climber is rewarded with stunning views of the surrounding islands and waterways, especially at sunrise and sunset.

The diving here is some of the very best in the area, if not the world. Spectacular sea mounts, glittering reefs, current swept channels all in a relatively small area make diving here a must on every visit. Recently on two of the sites we have watched hunting dolphins with an entourage of grey reef sharks and giant trevalli. On other sites here there are families of manta rays and we even saw a dugong/manatee on one dive late last year (2007).

Day 8:

Mysterious Forests & Cannibal Roc
Nusa Kode, South Rinca

Nusa Kode is the name of a small island that sits in the lower claw of the island of Rinca. Another name for this part of the Komodo National Park is Horseshoe Bay. The island of Nusa Kode creates a calm waterway, much like a very wide river that has two mouths to the open sea and sometimes

on an early morning entry into this area the low cloud hangs on the hills creating a very spooky atmosphere.

There is very dramatic scenery with the high hills of southern Rinca towering over the water. Wildlife of all kinds can be seen on the small beaches, pigs, monkeys, deer, sea eagles etc. This is also a great spot to observe Komodo dragons marching up and down the beaches and rummaging in the forests surrounding the waterway. There are some fascinating, and sometimes hair raising, land excursions to be had here.

Diving here has been written about in magazines, books and journals all over the world. It is sometimes cold, it is sometimes difficult to see in the plankton blooms but what awaits the diver here is nothing short of incredible; vibrant rocky reefs, sheer walls and dramatic sea mounts pulsate with marine life. There is even a critter/sand dive to match anything in the area. One of the sites here, Cannibal Rock, was once described as being one of the top five on the planet.

Day 9:

Chasing Dragons & Dancing In The Dark
Loh Liang, Central Komodo

Loh Liang is the bay on Komodo island where the new ranger station is located. It is from the jetty here that we begin our land tours to see the Komodo Dragon and the other wildlife living on this fascinating island. The Dragons can be seen around the ranger station offices and the museum. On the longer treks it is possible to see more dragons, many deer, wild pig, snakes, insects and birds, particularly the noisy sulphur crested cockatoos.

There is a particular night dive at Loh Liang that is fast becoming a favourite - Pink Beach. A mixture of sand and rocky reef this dive is comes alive after dark with interesting marine life, including the impressive Spanish Dancer.

Day 10:

Islands In The Stream
Tatawa, The Linta Strait

Located in the middle of the Komodo National Park, the Tatawa area - sometimes called "Current City" - consists of a group of small islands, rocky outcrops and sea mounts that are constantly buffeted with the strong currents sweeping up and down the Linta Strait that separates

Komodo from Rinca.

Topside the larger islands of Tatawa Besar, Siaba and Sebayor are rocky and grassy, great for hiking with some striking views of the park from their highest points. There is little wildlife but they do support a number of birds in the shape of sea eagles, cormorants, pelicans and ravens.

Current City is home to some of the most thrilling dives in Komodo. Spectacular coral reefs can be drifted over, sometimes at high speed, guided by friendly turtles. The sea mounts, when dived at the correct tide and sea states are among the very best in the world, teeming with some of the park's larger residents. The dramatic slopes, walls, pinnacles and caverns of these dives are covered with marine life and are a photographers dream in the normally great visibility.

There is even a manta cleaning station in very shallow water at the island of Mauan that provides thrilling close encounters with these gentle giants.

Day 11:

Disembarkation
Labuhan Bajo, West Flores

After a short cruise back to West Flores we will disembark at the pretty harbour town of Labuhan Bajo for the short ride to the airport and the flight back to Bali.

Please note: This itinerary is only an example and we may at times visit different areas than those shown in this document and we always operate with a keen eye on weather and sea conditions as well as marine life expectations.