



Back in Komodo 2014 - Trip Report by Karl Klingeler

Photos by Colin Marshall & Jaini Maryanti

First trip of the season back on board the Seven Seas and she looks as beautiful as ever! Mark and the crew did an amazing job in our annual dry dock and maintenance period. One of the things that was done that I really like is the "outdoor carpet" on the dive deck. It looks good, it's anti-slip and it feels good & it's not hot under your feet.

The first day on a late afternoon dive off Sebayor Point, we had major spawning activity. The marine scientists we had on board could not believe all the sex on the reef! The second day we spent in Lawa



Laut and it was one of those days in Komodo where the current never stopped but, with lots of current, you get lots of fish and get to see all the soft corals out in all their splendour. By the third dive, it was time to do an easy one, so we dived a beautiful hard coral garden with green sea turtles and even a ghost pipefish.

At Batu Bolong there is always a lot of activity. One thing we see often there is wrasse and butterflyfish eating the eggs of sergeant majors. Sergeant majors usually lay their eggs on rocks. As the eggs develop, they become purple in colour and cover large areas. As divers approach the eggs, the sergeant majors get scared away and the other fish come in for a feeding frenzy. If you then back away from the reef, the sergeant majors come back to defend their eggs and the attackers move on.

At the end of a drift dive on Tatawa Besar, we had an unbelievable experience. We saw dolphins underwater! A mother & calf played in the current above us and if this wasn't incredible enough, another mother and calf came into view from behind us! Momentarily, we could see both pairs. A rare thing in Indonesia to see dolphins while diving.



Horseshoe Bay was as productive as ever, with all the usual suspects: we had a pair of giant frogfish, one very pregnant, zebra crabs & coleman shrimp, bobbit worm, cyproidea and my favourite nudibranch, the *Ceratasoma Magnifica*. For the time of year, the visibility and water temperature were unusually good.



We also had Komodo dragons on the beach and we got up close and personal!





Torpedo Alley is always a hit with photographers and critter-lovers alike. Named after the torpedo ray, which Irwan found a pair of on this trip, you never know what surprises this site has to offer.



White-bellied sea eagles we often see in Komodo. They have learned to take advantage of scraps of food from liveaboards and the Seven Seas crew have become experts in luring them in, which makes for great photographic opportunities.



No Komodo trip is complete without a hike to the stunning Pink Beach on the island of Padar. It's nice to get off the boat and feel the sand between your toes.

South Komodo came through yet again with great manta ray encounters. On the second dive, we had 4-6 mantas being cleaned right in front of our faces for the whole dive.

On our last day of diving, we re-visited Gili Lawa Laut and it paid off. On Crystal Rock, there were so many fish, I could not see our divers through the schools - fusiliers, sweetlips, big-eye trevallies, giant trevallies and loads of surgeonfish. Then we did a dive on Fish Bowl that ended with 2 mantas being cleaned and a broadclub cuttlefish laying eggs! How can it get any better?



We finished our trip on a small island, where we had drinks and snacks on the beach while watching the sun set behind Sangeang while it was erupting - Wow! This was followed by dinner on the beach, star-gazing and music from the Seven Seas crew in the background.

Hope to see you soon on the Seven Seas!

Karl Klingeler
Cruise Director