

Cruising the Ring of Fire - East of Flores with the Seven Seas



Having just returned from another voyage on the Seven Seas, I must say that skirting the edge of the ring of fire is still one of my most favorite trips. I would just like to go over a few of the memorable moments shared onboard during the trip (October 16-26 of 2011, starting and ending in Maumere, island hopping East of Flores).

We set a new record by spotting seven volcanoes at once during a sunset at sea north of Lembata, 3 of which were visibly active. Marine Mammals were abundant. We were treated by shows from large schools of Spinner, Bottlenose, and Fraziers dolphins.



We spent two days exploring sites that have never been seen before. The calm weather and neap tides were on our side. South Pantar once again delivered the goods and is without a doubt the most exciting new area I have found in the last 20 years.

We added 3 new sites along the peninsula that is home to the existing sites of Alcatraz and Mecca (discovered during the Forgotten Islands trip of November 2010). We now have 7 world class sites in this area with a number of potential sites on the list of yet to be explored.

The Brewery in Lembata once again held up to its reputation of being the latest and greatest find in the last 10 years when it comes to critters. The night dive was incredible! We actually managed to offer night dives on 7 of the 9 nights spent onboard by our group. They were all excellent.



During one of the dives at a site named Beang Abeng in Pantar we witnessed three wonderpuss octopuses mating or perhaps I should say 2... and 1 somewhat confused individual joining in the fun?

We touched base with some culture while in Alor and had a welcome dance performed by the Aboi tribe. We then purchased some traditional weavings and had a colorful stop at the local market in Kalabahi. Also we visited a traditional weaving village called Watubelapi in the mountains of Flores.

Perhaps the highlight of the trip was our encounter with the world's largest living animal, the Blue whale. We spent a good half an hour cruising in the speed boat after the last dive of the trip with a Blue Whale. This massive whale was cruising underneath the speedboat and spouting right alongside of us for about 3 miles - apparently undisturbed by our presence. A total of 4 Blue whales were spotted during the trip and we had close encounters with 3 of them.



Last but not least I must thank the crew of the Seven Seas. Without a doubt it's the crew that makes sailing on the Seven Seas so special. They are the best, and to my sheer delight and amazement..... Just keep getting better!

All the best to you all, hope to take you out there soon!!

Mark Heighes