



Komodo - Deep South, December 2013/January 2014

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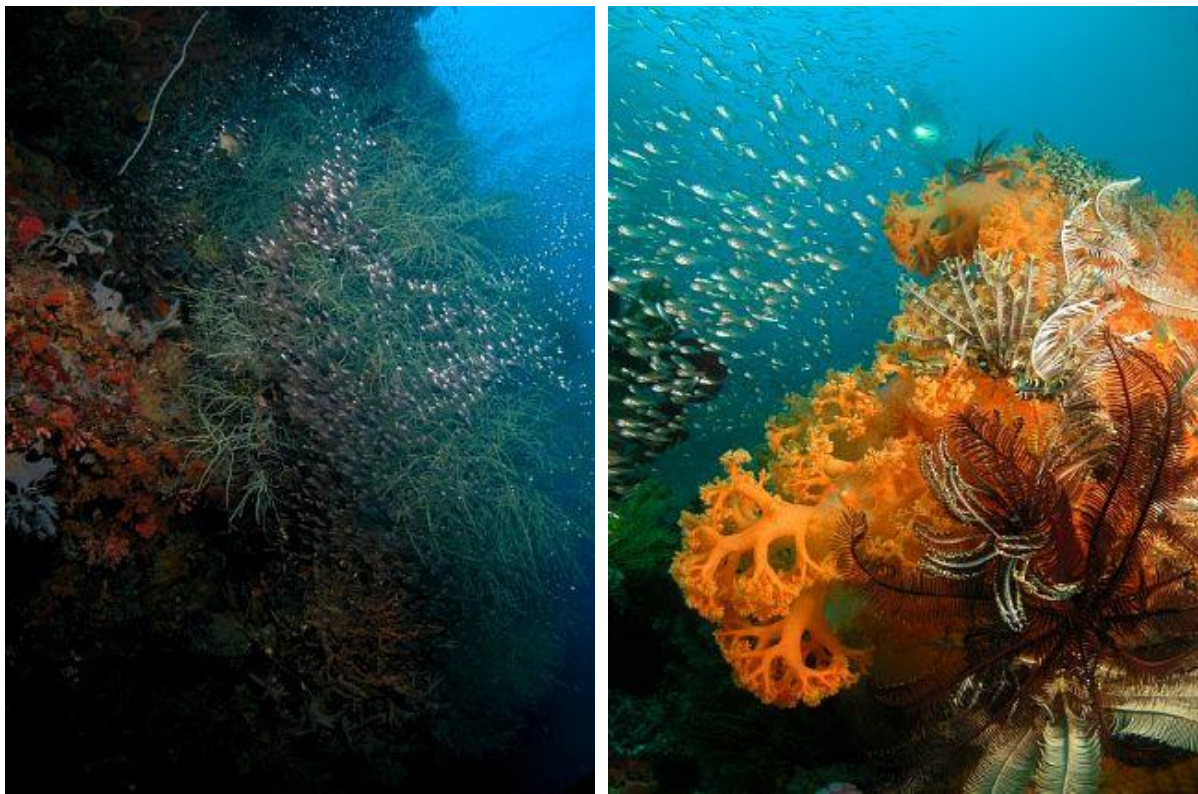
People keep asking: "What is South Komodo?" South Komodo is jumping in at Cannibal Rock and seeing the whole rock! Or jumping in at Yellow Wall and seeing all the way to the bottom! Amazing, clear, warm 84F degree water and some of the healthiest reefs you have ever seen, reefs inundated with crinoids and soft corals. On a "normal" 12 day Komodo trip we would spend 2-3 days in "South Komodo" and the rest of the time in the north. South Komodo trips are the opposite - we will spend most of our trip in the south.



The last time we dived the southern dive sites of the Komodo National Park at this time of year was 9 years ago and we were excited to be returning to begin the Seven Seas' newest itinerary: Deep South. Unlike during the "traditional" Komodo season of June-October, where the waters are cold and murky with nutrient-rich food, December-March brings warmer, clearer water, and the vibrant colours of southern Komodo's reefs are revealed. The reef is literally bursting with colour & life: feather stars of every shade of green, yellow & orange cling to corals and sponges, bright yellow tiny sea cucumbers litter the reef and, with a little current, the orange & green tubastrea cup corals bloom.

And it's not just underwater that the change of season is apparent - topside we see lush, green hills, looking almost like manicured lawns, the arid brown of Komodo has been rejuvenated by the first rains of the season. White-bellied sea eagles & brahmyn kites cruise the skies with an eye on the water, looking for a meal.

We spent a day in Gili Mota, first time in 10 years. Beautiful reefs and we had pretty good critters: zebra crab, coleman shrimp, pygmy seahorses - what lens do you choose? We also dived a new area for us in Rinca: the reef and fish life were pretty good but the highlight was 8 mobula rays on one dive and an oceanic manta feeding by doing back rolls! The crew on the tender boats spotted the manta while we were diving, so after the dive we jumped in with it - Wow! - amazing coloration - more white than black.



Horseshoe Bay on south Rinca Island is a toasty 84 degrees Fahrenheit (29C) so we enjoy long dives, coming up reluctantly only when our air is running low. Schools of yellow lined snapper and humpback snapper patrol Cannibal Rock, which is ablaze with colour. Glassfish & sweepers shelter in huge black coral bushes, hundreds of baitfish shimmer and sparkle in the sunlight as they move as one. The biggest Giant Trevally I have ever seen is as shocked to see me as I am to see him and he takes off! Schools of surgeonfish fly past in the blue, yellow butterflyfish and pink anthias stay close to the safety of the reef. An eagle ray keeps us company at Eagle Rock, as we mingle with the schools of surgeonfish, bohar snapper and bannerfish. With this water temperature, we have a full boat of night divers every night - torpedo rays and wonderpus are among the highlights at Torpedo Alley and Cannibal Rock after dark is an experience not to be missed!

When we dive Padar's "Three Sisters" in July-September, you cannot see from one rock to the next but today we can see all three rocks as we descend. Each rock is a riot of colour and life: bright blue palette surgeonfish, golden gorgonian sea fans, blue streaked fusiliers, corals and fishes of every colour of the rainbow a black "sponge" turns out to be a giant frogfish, perched on the reef waiting to ambush its next meal and a lavender stonefish could just as well be part of the rock, mobula rays come by to check us out.

Komodo's manta rays put on an amazing show for us at Karang Makassar, where every bommie had 2 or 3 mantas being cleaned. One of our guests was in tears after this dive, having spent almost the whole dive with one manta circling and looking her in the eye.

If you have already been to Komodo and liked it, you are going to love Deep South Komodo and if you haven't been to Komodo yet, this is a great opportunity to try it.

We hope to see you in the Deep South!

Karl & Linda

