



Komodo - Deep South, December 2013/January 2014

Trip Report by Sheri Tibbles, Photos by Dieter Vogel & Anders Osterballe

Most of my life is spent on land, surrounded by the myriad of sounds of the bustling city of Kuala Lumpur and its eclectic mix of 2 million amazing people. When I have time to explore new corners of the world, I often chose to venture below sea level. I have been lucky to be able to dive many different locations around the world and my favorite destination has remained the area in and around Komodo National Park, in Indonesia.

I had previously only experienced this fantastic location during the months of July to September. To an experienced diver of 25 years, this region continued to amaze me with its abundance of healthy reefs. I didn't mind donning a 5mm wetsuit. I thought that it could not get any better than this!!

Three years ago, a close friend asked me to spend a milestone birthday on the Seven Seas, diving in Komodo. That would put us in the waters there at an entirely different time of year. Why not give it a try??



We are just wrapping up that month long celebration and what a surprise to find that I am even more in awe of the wonders of this region!

These four weeks delivered endless dives in warmer, clearer waters than ever before! The fact that there were fewer commercial dive boats was a perk! The reefs were totally breathtaking in their abundance of soft and hard corals and I am certain that I saw every species of fish!

I have been diving in areas where there is so much evidence of destructive human interaction with the sea: dead reefs, fishless waters, 10-30 divers surrounding me at a time with no concern for conservation of the ocean or the culture supporting the region. This trip to Komodo has restored my faith in the fact that there are areas that flourish and thrive!! The crew of the Seven Seas delivered all of the positive experiences I could have imagined in this past month!



One other guest made this Deep South Komodo trip extraordinary. Emma, a bubbly, enthusiastic 13 year old: her excitement at discovering new fish and critters! The thrill of the sea as seen from her perspective warmed my heart and I appreciated every clam, and clown fish and sea cucumber as if it were my first one!! She helped remind me of why I ever started diving!!



There is just one dive I MUST share with you because very few bring me to tears while in the water (and for a time after this dive as well!!): my birthday-friend and I had the amazing luck to witness a

manta ray peacefully hanging out at a cleaning station. The manta simply glided between the two of us for 30 minutes. To watch nature at this level made this one my favorite ever in Komodo! I was about one meter away from the manta and I was looking into its eyes. I felt such a surge of emotion as I sensed as if she was communicating with me: that despite all of the negative impact that humans may have on the sea: that there is still hope as this was an example of her everyday life: living peacefully in the waters of Komodo. I looked across to my dear friend on the other side of the magical creature and I was sure that she too was sharing this once in a lifetime moment with me.

I said a prayer for that manta, as well as all the creatures of the sea: to protect them always.

We had a mix of weather: sunny days and sudden rainstorms that produced the most brilliant rainbows! And indeed! There is a pot of gold at the end of those rainbows: experiencing Deep South Komodo aboard the Seven Seas!!

I can't wait to come back again soon!!

Sheri Tibbles

