



Komodo Family trip, 22 - 29 July 2016

Trip Report by Titia Sprey and Lida Pet-Soede.

After the annual docking, I could not wait to see the new looks of the Seven Seas cabins. Trusted carpenter "Uncle Sis" who knows everything about how to ensure Indonesian timber is treated best for beautiful long-lasting results, had a team working hard during docking, taking out wooden planks to expose the structural beams and giving the cabin wood a white-wash effect to see the beautiful grain of the timber. The results are great, the cabins have a modern yet rustic feel and if the surrounds in Komodo were not so stunningly beautiful, I would have gladly spent more time reading and snoozing in the cosy bed rooms.



This trip would see a lot of variety in activities as our adventure included several long-time friends from Bali and the Netherlands and lots of friends of Eva and Laura. All in all, about half of us pushing 50++ including one of Netherlands best fysiotherapists (always handy) and the other half a gaggle of 18 year olds getting ready to start university after the trip, topped off with a couple of silly tweens and two "somewhere-inbetween" 13-year olds.

Titia:

Shortly after touching ground in Labuan Bajo and a very warm welcome by our cruise director Wai and the crew of the Seven Seas we took off and a little later we all were in the water. Our daughters (8,11) immediately dove in and under and started frantically pointing at all the colourful fish around them. Amazing how the islands in Komodo are just mostly barren rocks and then when you look under water the same rock is transformed with coral in brilliant colours, bizarre shapes, hallucinating patterns. It's like you are on another planet populated with loads of weird creatures...



On board of the Seven Seas we were in for a full schedule of different activities. Snorkling, diving, kayaking, hiking and (favorite activity for young girls) jumping from the boat in the bright blue water. In between and all around this, the continuous friendly and professional care of the crew was incredible. The food superb. I was continuously trying to expand my internal harddisk-drive to have more space to put up golden framed memories...





Before leaving for Indonesia we talked about snorkeling and diving. The children made a list of animals they would like to see:

1. Nemo fish (False Clown Anemone Fish)
2. Sea-turtle
3. Manta Ray
4. Cuttle Fish
5. Little shark

Already on the first snorkel we saw number 4 of our list. Two big cuttle fish let us come up close and admire their changing colours and skintexture. One of them was laying eggs. Very cautiously with her tentacles she positioned the little balls in the coral.

So next we were on the hunt for the nemo fish. Of course they are quite common but it's nice to have a special focus. We consulted on board reef guides and tried to memorize the different species. On one of the dives it seemed like there was a spotlight on the reef. A bleached anemone. Although a bad sign, the sight is stunning; an extreme white, almost blue-ish anemone with several clown fish playing hide and seek in it.



Turtles were in abundance, too. Every time as spectaculair as the first one. Swimming off in the blue, slowly flapping their fins, munching on the coral. We saw different sizes, some sleeping on the coral, well camouflaged. One big one still stands out in my memory, big as a small car, chilling on the reef and allowing us to come up close to see the structure and patern of its shield.

Next on the list, the Manta Rays, were an absolute height of the trip. We cruised to the far south of the park, Manta Alley, where the water was a bit colder. There was a big group, some cicling on the bottom for a go in a cleaning station, but most of them right on the surface feeding. What an

exitement! All around us, circling, diving, turning! Showing their enormous mouths and filters. While admiring one, another one flew right below us, giving us the feel like we were on a flying carpet, easily fitting the whole family. They came up so close that occasionally one of their wingtips touched us. An unforgettable experience.





At the end of each day the program was topped of with a beach visit. Like Robinson Crusoe but then at the high end. We enjoyed cold drinks and excellent snacks at black, grey, white or pink beaches. The last night we introduced the famous Dutch tradition of Bonte Avond. The crew prepared a small coral island, made a big fire, set up some tables and chairs and even swiped the beach. Jos and Lida each chose guests in their teams and then we did a quiz about the cruise; What does it mean if the ship-bell rings 3 times? How many fruitbats did we see leave the mangrove forest? Who gave our cruise director Wai an aquatic haircut? Etc. The score was kept by big chunks of coral - ending in a 7 to 7 draw and time for a last dinner by our fantastic chef.

This trip was another example of how much fun Komodo is for people of all ages with different levels of confidence in the water. Aside from the overwhelming natural scenery and abundant underwater wild life, we organised volleyball games, there were some 5000 selfies made, we had camp fires and even caught our own fish for fresh sashimi.





Check out our trip video with some great close-up footage of full sized black-tip reef sharks, great manta snorkeling action and even a dive with a dolphin at castle rock!

Titia Sprey and Lida Pet-Soede
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