

INDONESIA

BALI TO KOMODO

A wonderful wildlife cruise, 10th-19th Sept 2017

Led by Dr. Charles Anderson

SUMMARY

Join us for a 9 night / 10 day cruise from Bali to Komodo and back in September 2017. On board our exclusively chartered liveaboard vessel, we will cruise eastwards from Bali for 3 days, watching out for dolphins and whales, and anchoring most nights in sheltered locations for island visits and snorkeling on the magnificent coral reefs. A further 3 days will be spent around Komodo, an area known for its high density of whales and dolphins. There will be visits ashore to see the famous Komodo Dragons and other wildlife. And there will also be time for more snorkeling on the coral reefs, where there is a real chance of Manta Rays. We then wend our way back towards Bali, with plenty more time for cetacean watching and snorkeling en-route.

INTRODUCTION TO INDONESIA

Indonesia is a country of superlatives. It is the largest archipelago in the world (over 17,000 islands) with a stunning diversity of cultures, and the most diverse marine-life anywhere. For example, over 3500 species of fish have been recorded – more than enough to keep the keenest snorkeler enthralled. Although it is not well known, this diversity also extends to the marine mammals. Our recent trips have highlighted the wealth of tropical whale and dolphin species within the Komodo National Park and adjoining waters.

Our cruise starts from the island of Bali, which is just as exotic as it sounds, especially away from the busy south. But Bali is just the beginning of a great arc of islands, Nusa Tenggara or the Lesser Sunda Islands, which stretches away to the east. These islands (Lombok, Sumbawa, Komodo and Flores) become more arid the further east you go, and are of particular interest to naturalists because it is here that the Asian fauna finally gives way to Australasian wildlife (the boundary being marked as the famous Wallace's Line).

DATES

The dates of our 2017 trip are:

Trip	Group size	Depart Bali	Return Bali	Nights	RRP From
Bali to Komodo	14 max	10 Sep, Sun	19 Sep, Tue	9	£2600

These dates are for *time on board*. Add on time at each end to include international flights. We *strongly* recommend that you arrive in Bali one day early at the very latest; the boat cannot wait for late arrivals.

OUR BOAT

On this trip we travel through the Indonesian archipelago on board our exclusively chartered 28 m liveaboard safari vessel, **M.V. Mermaid**. She is very comfortable and ideal for our needs. *Mermaid* has a local crew of 15, including an experienced captain and a full-time cook. There are 8 cabins, including: one master suite, with panoramic windows looking forward over the bows; five standard cabins on the main deck, each with windows; and two lower deck cabins without windows. All are ensuite and air-conditioned.

Our itinerary while on board will be very flexible, to make the most of cetacean sightings. The outline given below should therefore be considered to be a guideline only, not a rigidly structured programme. We will journey past far-flung islands, enjoying the volcanic scenery, and taking our time to watch dolphins, whales, flying fish and seabirds. We will travel by day and anchor early most evenings in a sheltered spot (although because of the distances involved we will have to make up time by cruising some nights). Depending on our location there should be opportunities for a snorkel or island visit at these times, using the *Mermaid's* two inflatable tenders. And after dark, far from city lights, the top deck offers stunning views of the night sky.

In summary, this promises to be a superb wildlife cruise with great cetacean sightings, magnificent coral reefs and tropical islands together with friendly local people and not-so-friendly Komodo Dragons.

ITINERARY

Bali to Komodo, 2017

Day 1. Sun 10 Sept. Start of cruise from Bali. Board MV *Mermaid* at Bena port, from 1300h. Depart soon after 1430h. Cruise to Nusa Penida Island, looking out for dolphins en-route. There may be time for a coral reef snorkel after anchoring. After sunset tonight there will be an orientation talk, and on most other nights there will be a slide show. Note: You should arrive in Bali at least one day early.

Days 2-3. Mon 11 and Tues 12 Sept. To Komodo. We will slowly work our way eastwards, past the islands of Lombok and Sumbawa, looking out along the way for whales and dolphins, flying fish and seabirds. There will be opportunities for snorkeling on the coral reefs and for island visits.

Days 4-6. Wed 13 to Fri 15 Sept. Around Komodo. We plan to have three full days within the Komodo National Park. There should be time to visit both Komodo and Rinca Islands to see the extremely impressive Komodo Dragons, and other wildlife. We will snorkel on some of the superb coral reefs, and hope to encounter Manta Rays at one site. And of course our main aim will still be locating and observing whales and dolphins.

Day 7-9. Sat 16 Mon 18 Sept. Heading Westwards. We return to Bali by a similar route to that taken out, with plenty more time for whale and dolphin watching. However, we do expect to use different anchorages, allowing us to snorkel on different reefs and perhaps also to visit different islands. We should arrive back at Bena port in Bali in the evening of our last full day.

Day 10. Tues 19 Sept. Disembark. After breakfast we will sadly have to disembark and transfer to accommodation ashore or to International Airport for flight home.

NATURALIST

These trips will be led by Dr. Charles 'Chas' Anderson, a professional marine biologist who lives and works in the Maldives. He is an authority on both the cetaceans and fishes of the tropical Indian Ocean, and the pioneer of whale and dolphin watching in the region. Chas has made numerous visits to Indonesia over the past 25 years (including a spell working as a diving instructor on Flores), and has dived widely throughout the archipelago. He is the author of 'An Underwater Guide to Indonesia', and a major contributor to the best-selling divers' guide 'Underwater Indonesia'. Chas may be assisted by his wife Sue Anderson, who is a qualified nurse as well as an experienced and enthusiastic whale spotter, and is well known as a caring host.

CLIMATE

Indonesia spans the equator, so the climate is tropical. September-November is the inter-monsoon season, and is normally calm and sunny, but the wind can occasionally pick up and bring showers. Temperatures typically reach 29-33°C during the day, dropping to about 25-27°C at night. Sea breezes make this quite comfortable, although when there is no wind it does feel hot. While snorkeling, sea temperatures are pleasantly warm (typically 27-29°C). In a few places (eg off the south of Komodo) the sea can be cooler (24-27°C) as a result of upwelling – which is the source of nutrients that ultimately feed the local Mantas and cetaceans.

COSTS

All per person

Master suite:	£3260
Standard cabin:	£3130
Lower deck cabin:	£2600
Single supplement:	£825

Includes: Accommodation and all meals on *MV Mermaid*; teas and coffees; naturalist guide; transfers to boat from airport and nearby hotels and vice versa.

Does not include: International flights; Indonesian visa fee; insurance; airport transfers to and from more distant hotels on Bali; bar bill; airport taxes; gratuities; personal items. Also, there is a Komodo National Park entrance fee (currently US\$90 per person) which has to be paid in person on site.

Payment schedule: To confirm your booking we will require a non-refundable deposit of £700 per person. The balance should be paid no later than three months before departure. *We reserve the right to impose a surcharge at cost in case of major fuel or foreign currency price increases.*

It is a good idea to bring US Dollars or Euros cash to cover miscellaneous expenses.

INDONESIAN WILDLIFE

Cetaceans

The main attraction of whale and dolphin watching in Indonesia is the wonderful diversity of tropical cetaceans. Our previous trips have highlighted the abundance of species in and around the Komodo National Park. Of course, nothing can be guaranteed with wild animals, but it would be very surprising if we did not see a good selection of whales and dolphins. Cetaceans that we are quite likely to see include:

Blue whale	<i>Balaenoptera musculus</i>
Sperm whale	<i>Physeter macrocephalus</i>
Dwarf sperm whale	<i>Kogia sima</i>
Pilot Whale	<i>Globicephala macrorhynchus</i>
Melon-headed whale	<i>Peponocephala electra</i>
Spinner Dolphin	<i>Stenella longirostris</i>
Spotted Dolphin	<i>Stenella attenuata</i>
Risso's Dolphin	<i>Grampus griseus</i>
Bottlenose Dolphin	<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>
Indo-pacific Bottlenose	<i>Tursiops aduncus</i>
Fraser's dolphin	<i>Lagenodelphis hosei</i>

Another species that we will be looking out for especially is Eden's Whale. This little-known baleen whale is a pending split from Bryde's Whale, occurs in inshore waters around the northern Indian and western Pacific Oceans, and has been positively recorded several times from the south of Komodo. Other potential species include:

Eden's Whale	<i>Balaenoptera edeni</i>
Bryde's whale	<i>Balaenoptera brydei</i>
Pygmy killer whale	<i>Feresa attenuata</i>
False Killer Whale	<i>Pseudorca crassidens</i>
Killer whale	<i>Orcinus orca</i>
Cuvier's beaked whale	<i>Ziphius cavirostris</i>
Humpback dolphin	<i>Sousa chinensis</i>
Rough-toothed dolphin	<i>Steno bredanensis</i>

Other Wildlife

While out with the whales and dolphins there will be plenty of opportunities for seabird watching. Many tropical species have been recorded from the region. Possibilities include Boobies (Brown and Red-footed), Frigatebirds (Lesser, Great and possibly also Christmas Island), Tropicbirds (notably the beautiful golden form of White-tailed), Shearwaters (Wedge-tailed and Streaked), Petrels and Storm-petrels (Bulwer's, Wilson's, Swinhoe's and Matsudaira's) as well as thousands of dainty Red-necked Phalaropes.

As for land birds, Indonesia has the highest diversity in the entire Old World, and the Lesser Sunda Islands alone are home to some 45 endemic species. We will not have time to search them all out, but we will have some island visits, and can expect to see a number of local specialties. These should include the Yellow-crested Cockatoo, once widely distributed but now endangered and seen regularly only within the Komodo

National Park. A further terrestrial attraction should be the thousands of fruit bats that roost on the small island of Satonda off Sumbawa.

However, the main attraction on land is undoubtedly the Komodo Dragon. This fearsome lizard can grow to over 3m (10') in length. It is confined to Komodo and Rinca Islands (and some small surrounding areas) and we expect to go ashore on both.

Other Marine Life

While underway, in addition to whales and dolphins, we will undoubtedly see plenty of other marine life. Both flying fish and tuna are abundant and should be spotted regularly. If we are lucky we may see Turtles, Sailfish and possibly also a Whale Shark. But a real highlight should be snorkeling on the magnificent coral reefs, which are alive with myriad colourful reef fishes. And at one site on the south side of Komodo we have a real chance of snorkeling with Manta Rays. There will be time in the evenings for discussion and identification of the bewildering variety of reef animals.

FLIGHT INFORMATION

You will need to arrange your own flight to Bali in Indonesia. Note that Ngurah Rai International Airport is at Denpasar in Bali, and most airlines list it as Denpasar.

Scheduled airlines flying to Denpasar include *Singapore Airlines* (SQ), *Garuda Indonesia* (GA), *Malaysia Airlines* (MH), *Cathay Pacific* (CX) and *Qatar Airways* (QR). September is a moderately busy time for flights; do book early, especially for the best prices.

We can board the *MV Mermaid* from about 1300h on the first day. We should set sail soon after 1430h. I strongly recommend arriving in Bali at least one day early, and ideally even earlier. That will allow time to recover from the long flight, see something of Bali, and minimize the risk of arriving late and missing the boat.

We expect to return to Benoa port, Bali, during the late afternoon or evening of the penultimate day. We will disembark after breakfast on the last day. Flights can be arranged for any time after about 10:00h that morning.

Airline timetables are available at:

www.singaporeair.com

www.garudaindonesia.co.uk

www.malaysiaairlines.com

www.emirates.com

www.srilankan.aero

www.qatarairways.com

www.klm.com

www.cathaypacific.com

www.flyroyalbrunei.com

STOPOVERS

Bali is a long way from Europe, so if you have the time you might want to think about a stopover, either on the outward or return journey. The airline you choose will determine your likely options, eg Singapore with SQ, Kuala Lumpur with MH or Hong Kong with CX.

In Bali itself, there are *many* options for accommodation. Note that the airport and Benoa port (from which we sail) are both in the far south of Bali. If you have only one or two nights in Bali before sailing you might want to stay relatively nearby, eg in Nusa Dua or Sanur. If you have more time, you might want to explore further away from the somewhat crowded south.

VISAS

You will require a visa for Indonesia. Nationals of some countries (mostly in SE Asia and Europe, including the UK) will be issued with a free 30-day tourist visa on arrival. Nationals of other countries will also have a visa issued on arrival, but will have to pay a fee (currently US\$35 payable in cash on arrival). Everyone must have at least 6 months remaining on their passport and a valid return air ticket.

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