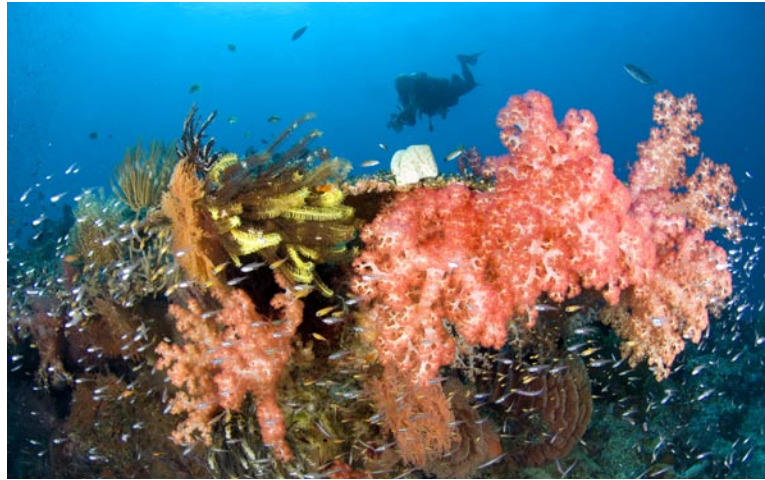


# Damsels & Dragons with Mustard

*The fantastic creatures of Komodo and Rinca with Alex Mustard*



Bargibanti Pygmy Seahorse (Alex Mustard)



Soft corals, crinoids and a profusion of fish (Alex Mustard)



Commensal shrimps on sea urchin (Alex Mustard)

*“Profusion defines Komodo’s marine life. The reefs explode with fish and invertebrates, and every available surface is plastered with life and colour. Two hundred and fifty species of coral, and more than a thousand species of fish are found here. The area is also excellent for ‘critters’; favourites such as pygmy seahorses and frogfish are common, it is a prime location for nudibranchs, and even rarities like Rhinopias are seen on most trips. Famous dive sites such as Horseshoe Bay and Cannibal Rock are discussed with due reverence by well-traveled divers. Alex’s friend, Peter Scoones, told him that he recently had the best dive of his long career here.”*

Saturday 17th September – Sunday 2nd October 2011 (16 days)  
Bali Pre-Tour Extension from Tuesday 13th September (4 days)  
Leader: Dr Alex Mustard  
Group size limit: 15 plus leader

The exotic islands of Komodo and Rinca offer some of the world’s most spectacular underwater sights, in a remote region of Indonesia where the words, sometimes printed on ancient maps, ‘Here Be Dragons’ really are appropriate! We will make a land excursion to see the famous and impressive Komodo Dragons at this World Heritage Site, but the focus of our trip will of course be underwater.

We have selected the luxury liveaboard boat, *Siren*, that specializes in trips for underwater photographers. *Siren* provides superb accommodation and diving management along with excellent facilities for the underwater photographer, such as dedicated preparation areas, plenty of charge points, storage areas, dedicated rinse tanks, computers in every cabin to allow you to download and edit your day’s work and a large plasma screen in the saloon to view and share your days pictures with your fellow underwater photographers. Our 12 nights charter has been designed to meet the needs of this specific group and will visit dive sites not available on standard Komodo cruises.

Profusion defines Komodo’s marine life. The reefs explode with fish and invertebrates, and every available surface is plastered with life and colour. Two hundred and fifty species of coral, and more than a thousand species of fish are found here. The area is also excellent for ‘critters’; favourites such as pygmy seahorses and frogfish are common, it is a prime location for nudibranchs, and even rarities like *Rhinopias* are seen on most trips. Famous dive sites such as Horseshoe Bay and Cannibal Rock are discussed with due reverence by well-traveled divers. Alex’s friend, Peter Scoones, told him that he recently had the best dive of his long career here. But in this remote area new sites are still being discovered. Less well known is that Komodo is home to some of the world’s best manta dives, where groups of over one hundred of these graceful giants can be seen feeding together!

The reason for richness is strong currents. Currents in the ocean bring life, like spring does on land. Underwater, Komodo is an area that is constantly in the flourish of spring. Although we think of sea level as a constant, the Pacific Ocean is actually higher than the Indian Ocean. So the islands of Indonesia form a leaking dam between them. One of the biggest leaks is between the islands of Sumbawa and Flores, which is partly plugged by the islands of Komodo and Rinca. These currents bring food and upwelling nutrients, supercharging the food chain from the sessile invertebrates to the pelagic predators. The result is a concentration of some of the richest reefs in the world.

Being at the boundary of two great oceans means that the southern part of the

Komodo archipelago offers a wide variety of dive sites, scenery and creatures. The northern sites, where the Pacific’s influence dominates are warmer and bathed in clear, blue waters. The Indian Ocean and cooler, greener, nutrient rich waters, sucked up from the depths by the current flow, dominate the south. These waters are where life explodes and many of the best dives are found at the southern ends of Komodo and Rinca.

The details of this trip have been specifically planned for the benefit of underwater photographers. We will board *Siren* at Bima on the island of Sumbawa, to give us the maximum time in the heart of this region. This specially chartered trip is also longer than the standard charters, so that we will have time to reap the photographic benefits. The plan is that when we find sites that are really hot, we will stay there and dive them repeatedly. With such a richness of subjects, one dive is never enough on the best sites in Komodo. The trip is also timed for the dark phase of the moon, which many critter-lovers strongly believe always leads to the richest sightings.

Of course, strong currents are not ideal for underwater photography and we have taken great care to schedule this trip to include two periods of neap tides, to get the easiest conditions. However, currents will still flow and if you are considering this trip, it is important to be comfortable diving in these conditions. Being at the crossroads of oceans means that diving conditions will also be variable. Typically more northern sites will be warmer and the more southern sites

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Yellowtail Damsel (Alex Mustard)



Komodo Dragon, the world's largest lizard (Pindito)

will be colder. We will dive both, but will probably favour the cooler, lower visibility sites, for their richness. It is important to bring wetsuits/skins appropriate for the range of conditions we will encounter.

Before we join *Siren* for this remarkable trip there will be an optional pre-tour extension in Bali searching for some special creatures. Our short stay will be at the very comfortable Scuba Seraya, where our every diving need is catered for by their superb team, and we will be taking boat dives to the Liberty wreck (where Alex has even had encounters with the remarkable Ocean Sunfish or *Mola mola!*) and exploring the excellent house reef from the shore.

Underwater photographer and marine biologist, Dr Alex Mustard will lead this trip, drawing on his extensive experience across Indonesia. There will be no formal photographic teaching during this trip, but Alex will always be on hand to give informal advice on underwater photography techniques and information on the marine life.

## OUTLINE ITINERARY

**Saturday 17th September:** Singapore Airlines midday flight from London Heathrow, bound for Singapore.

**Sunday 18th September:** Morning arrival in Singapore, where we connect with an onward flight to Denpasar, arriving in the early afternoon. On arrival transfer to the comfortable Puri Santrian Hotel for an overnight stay.

**Monday 19th September:** Transfer to Denpasar Airport for the short flight to

Bima. This afternoon board *Siren* for a 12 nights cruise.

**Tuesday 20th September – Friday 30th September:** Diving the superb reefs of Komodo and Rinca, and making a shore excursion to see the famous Komodo Dragons.

**Saturday 1st October:** Disembark *Siren* and transfer to Bima Airport for a short midday flight to Denpasar where we connect with a Singapore Airlines evening flight bound for London via Singapore.

**Sunday 2nd October:** Morning arrival at London Heathrow.

Note: We would recommend that participants have a night in Denpasar after the cruise if possible. Flight delays on internal flights in Indonesia occur more frequently than in developed countries.

**£3023** Denpasar/Denpasar (provisional price, to be confirmed)

### Includes:

- Airport transfers in Bali and Bima.
- 1 night room and American breakfast on a twin/share basis at the Puri Santrian Hotel, Denpasar
- Denpasar/Bima/Denpasar return flights.
- 12 nights cruise with full board (breakfast, lunch and dinner) plus coffee, tea, fruit juice, soft drinks, fresh fruit and beer on a twin/share basis on *Siren*.
- 10 full days of air or nitrox diving (up to 4 dives per day), plus one dive on the first day and one or two dives on the last full day (subject to local conditions and outbound flight times); escorted land tours where appropriate. Should you wish, dive gear (3 mm

shorty wetsuit, regulator, BCD and fins) is included.

- Services of Dr Alex Mustard as leader.

In addition, there is a Komodo park fee of €65 (subject to change), which is payable onboard.

### Single Occupancy Supplement:

£45 for the Puri Santrian Hotel (the supplement can be avoided if your cabin mate on *Siren* shares a twin room with you). On *Siren* the supplement is £2134 (but you can avoid paying the supplement if you are willing to share a cabin). Provisional prices, to be confirmed.

### PRE-TOUR EXTENSION ITINERARY

**Tuesday 13th September:** Singapore Airlines midday flight from London Heathrow, bound for Singapore.

#### Wednesday 14th September:

Morning arrival in Singapore, where we connect with an onward flight to Denpasar, arriving in the early afternoon. Transfer to Scuba Seraya for 4 nights stay.

**Thursday 15th September- Saturday 17th September:** Three days of boat and shore diving at Scuba Seraya.

**Sunday 18th September :** Dry out the gear, snorkel or relax in the sunshine this morning. In the afternoon transfer to Sanur near Denpasar for an overnight stay at the comfortable Puri Santrian Hotel.

**£392** Denpasar/Denpasar (provisional price, to be confirmed)

### Includes:

- Transfers to and from Scuba Seraya.
- 4 nights room and American

breakfast on a twin/share basis in a Maisonette Room at Scuba Seraya.

- 3 days of diving (4 boat dives, 5 shore dives).
- Services of Dr Alex Mustard as leader.

### Upgrade to Ocean View Villa: £124.

Provisional price, to be confirmed. Double bed configuration only.

**Single Occupancy Supplement:** £119 in a Maisonette Room or £243 in an Ocean View Villa. Provisional prices, to be confirmed. Please note that, while we will endeavour to find a room-mate for those on the tour who are single travellers and would prefer to share accommodation, in the event of a room-mate not being available the single occupancy supplement will apply. Room-mates will be allocated on a first-come first-served basis.

**Deposit:** Initial deposit £200, with a further £800 at 12 months before departure, for Denpasar/Denpasar arrangements.

For details of *Siren*, and more about diving around Komodo, please see our general Komodo & Nusa Tenggara holiday description. For details of the diving and accommodation at Scuba Seraya please see our general Bali holiday description.

**Flights:** From about £646 to Denpasar.

### STOP-OVERS & ADDITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS:

It is simple to extend your stay in Bali, perhaps to include a stay at Mimpi Menjangan. Stop-overs are available in Singapore. Talk to us about the possibilities.