

Bali to Komodo – In Search of the Dragon!

Naturetrek Tour Report

9 - 21 September 2019



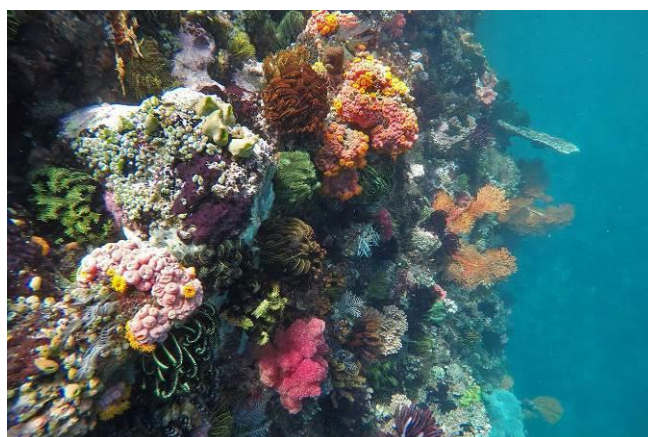
Komodo Dragon (Sara Frost)



Java Banded Pitta (Anne Woodington)



Manta Ray (Sara Frost)



Crinoid Canyon (Sara Frost)

Report compiled by Sara Frost
Images courtesy of Anne Woodington & Sara Frost



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Introduction

Guests on this wonderful 14-day tour of the pristine and unspoiled islands of Indonesia were treated to fantastic sightings of cetaceans, totalling eight species: Common and Indo-Pacific Bottlenose, Risso's, Pantropical Spotted, Spinner and Fraser's Dolphins plus Dwarf Sperm Whales and Melon-headed Whales. The group also enjoyed breath-taking snorkelling over stunning, colourful coral reefs teeming with such life as Green and Hawksbill Turtles, Black-tip Reef Sharks, Moray Eels, Nudibranchs and (quite literally!) a countless number of fish species. On land, we explored the islands of Komodo and Rinca, with the guided walks on both islands providing excellent views of the formidable Komodo Dragons, as well as Yellow-crested Cockatoos, Flame-breasted Sunbirds, Orange-footed Scrubfowl and Green Junglefowl (to mention only a few species!). Our experience was very much enhanced by the ever-attentive crew of our vessel – both on board and when in the water! This was truly a superb trip, a 'must do' for any keen snorkeler or tropical wildlife enthusiast!

Day 1

Monday 9th September

London to Bali

For most of the group, today was spent in transit from the UK, although some arrived from other parts of the world, and others had chosen to arrive in Bali a day or two early in order to acclimatise and spend a few extra days in paradise!

Day 2

Tuesday 10th September

Bali

Most of the group landed in Bali at midday, and those who had arrived earlier met the group in the Arrivals area of Bali Denpasar airport. We then boarded our private coach to take us to The Menjangan, a peaceful nature retreat located within the heart of the unspoilt Bali Barat National Park, a scenic five hour drive away on Bali's north west coast. We arrived at 7pm, after dark, and were greeted by the smiling and welcoming staff, who provided us with refreshing handtowels and served us ginger tea and light appetisers while we were checked in. Our luggage was taken to our rooms for us while we sat in 'the tower' (a huge four storey tree-house) and for a delicious three course dinner. We all then opted for an early night, ready for our 6am start the following day!

Day 3

Wednesday 11th September

Bali

This morning we met at 6am, just as dawn was breaking, for our first bird walk. We separated into two groups – one went exploring the reserve by open jeep, the other on foot. We were here in the dry season, and so the forest was almost devoid of green – the bare trees (having dropped their leaves) now made for very good birdwatching, hence our well-timed arrival here! The leaves littered the forest floor, colouring it golden brown, and it certainly would have been almost impossible to see so many species during the wet season when the trees were in leaf. Some highlights from group's morning birding walks included Olive-backed Sunbird, Green

Junglefowl, Helmeted Friarbird, Scarlet-headed Flowerpecker, noisy flocks of beautiful Small Minivets, Black-winged Starlings and Coppersmith Barbets.

We returned to our rooms for 8:30am and, after dropping off our bags, took the converted jeeps (with wonderful roof-top seats providing 360° forest views en route!) for the five minute ride to 'the tower' for a delicious breakfast, from which we could now enjoy the scenery that we hadn't been able to see the night before once the sun had set. We had a marvellous elevated view across the Bali Barat National Park, and those who wished to were able to sit scanning the tops of the trees with binoculars whilst tucking into breakfast, which included a wonderful variety of dishes such as freshly made omelettes, eggs benedict, pancakes, homemade granolas, yogurts, Indonesian savoury porridge (with leek, garlic and chicken!) huge tropical fruit salads and much more. Noisy Yellow-vented Bulbuls called from the tops of the trees next to us, along with Sunda (AKA Island) Collared Doves and Barred Doves.

After a leisurely breakfast, Sara ran a snorkelling session on the beach to give everyone their first taste of Indonesian coral reefs. The reef was sheltered, the ideal place for a practice snorkel, and we enjoyed pottering over the sand and coral examining the numerous species of fish below us. We finished at 11am, and the group were then at leisure to do as they wished until 3:30pm when we would meet for our second birdwatching walk of the day. Several guests went for massages (one of the many activities on offer in addition to horse riding, cycling and diving). It was a glorious hot sunny day, so others went to relax by the pool by our rooms, while others enjoyed taking a light lunch in the shade on the terrace at the beach.

At 3:30pm both groups set off walking along forest trails. During our time exploring the grounds of the lodge (and indeed the rest of the National Park) we barely saw a single other person, which made our time here feel even more exclusive. Highlights of the walks included the Yellow-throated Hanging-parrot (previously known as Javan Hanging Parrot), Grey-necked Green Pigeon, Pied Triller, Black Eagle, Javan Cuckooshrike, Emerald Doves and, what we were all hoping to see, the critically endangered (and verging on extinct in the Wild) Bali Starlings. Bali Starlings are highly sought-after for the pet trade, and by the early 1990s the wild population had diminished to around only 30 birds. The continuance of extreme poaching meant that 10 years later there were only two or three breeding pairs left in the national park. Following a captive breeding and release programme, the numbers have increased, and wild-born starlings are now once again breeding in the park. Seeing these bright-white birds fly overhead and, on a couple of occasions, perched at the tops of trees near us, was a wonderful sight.

During our afternoon session we also walked through the dry mangroves and saw hundreds of crab holes/burrows, and a troop of 20+ Long-tailed Macaques.

At 5:30pm we returned to our rooms for refreshing showers and to change, and then went to the beach where Sara had booked a table for our evening meal on the gorgeous terrace, which was lit up by lanterns. After a three course meal and drinks, we headed to bed at 10pm.

Day 4

Thursday 12th September

Bali

This morning we met again at 6am for a birding walk, split into two groups again, and both groups took it in turns to visit the Bali Starling Sanctuary – a tiny establishment with about 10 large cages, and a single ranger protecting them. The birds nosily fluttered around their enclosures, and some were together in very small (temporary) cages in hope they would pair and mate. It was rather surreal to walk along the enclosures, and to think that we were looking at the world's remaining population of this species (bar the few still in the wild, some of which we'd been fortunate enough to see).

When leaving the Starling Sanctuary, one of the groups had a flurry of excitement as a Javan Banded Pitta was seen hopping about in the leaf litter within some bushes. We positioned ourselves to get a good view, and marvelled at the stunning plumage of this lovely bird, which was lit up beautifully in the sunlight about 12 metres away from us. As we continued walking, we marvelled at several acacia trees, which stood head and shoulders above all other trees, and their pale bark appeared golden in the morning sunlight.

We then went to the beach for breakfast, where tables had been set out for the group on the terrace and we could tuck into another wave of delicious food! As we ate, we had excellent views of both a Collared and a Sacred Kingfisher, which perched on exposed branches on the nearby mangrove trees over the water. The smell of incense wafted in the air, the Hindu staff having just placed their daily offering of rice, flowers, fruit and incense (put out without fail every morning in Bali!) next to a small shrine at the base of a tree.

We then had the next few hours at leisure, before meeting again at 3:30pm for our final birdwatching walk (highlights included Blue-tailed Bee-eaters, a White-shouldered Triller, Javan Tailorbird, Greater Racket-tailed Drongo and Pink-breasted Green Pigeon). We returned at 5:30pm and met at the tower for sunset drinks. We climbed right to the fourth floor and enjoyed beers and cocktails with stunning views over the forest – the talk over drinks full of interest about the species seen and enjoyed over the previous two days. Then, at 7pm, Sara had arranged a BBQ on the beach for the group which was a wonderful private dinner all to ourselves. Candles were lit in the sand, and we had two chefs cooking and preparing us a delicious selection of meats, fish, vegetables and salads. Much laughter and chatter was had over the meal, and once incapable of eating any more delicious food, we retreated to bed.

Day 5

Friday 13th September

Bali

This morning was at leisure, and most of the group opted for a lie in! We enjoyed a final breakfast in the Tower and then left the Menjangan Lodge at 11am for our five hour drive back to Sanur, where we arrived at our lovely hotel at 4pm. After a quick check in, guests had three hours to freshen up, relax in their rooms and stroll around the beautifully-kept grounds of the Mercure Hotel – the paths and gardens between the rooms being filled with endless colourful flowers, palm trees filled with noisy birds, hidden shrines and two swimming pools.

The group then met Sara at 7pm when she took them to a local restaurant on the beach for another candle-lit dinner in the sand. There was live music which added to the atmosphere, along with the relaxing sound of gentle waves on the shore line! The group enjoyed sampling different local cuisines and we headed to bed at 10pm.

Day 6

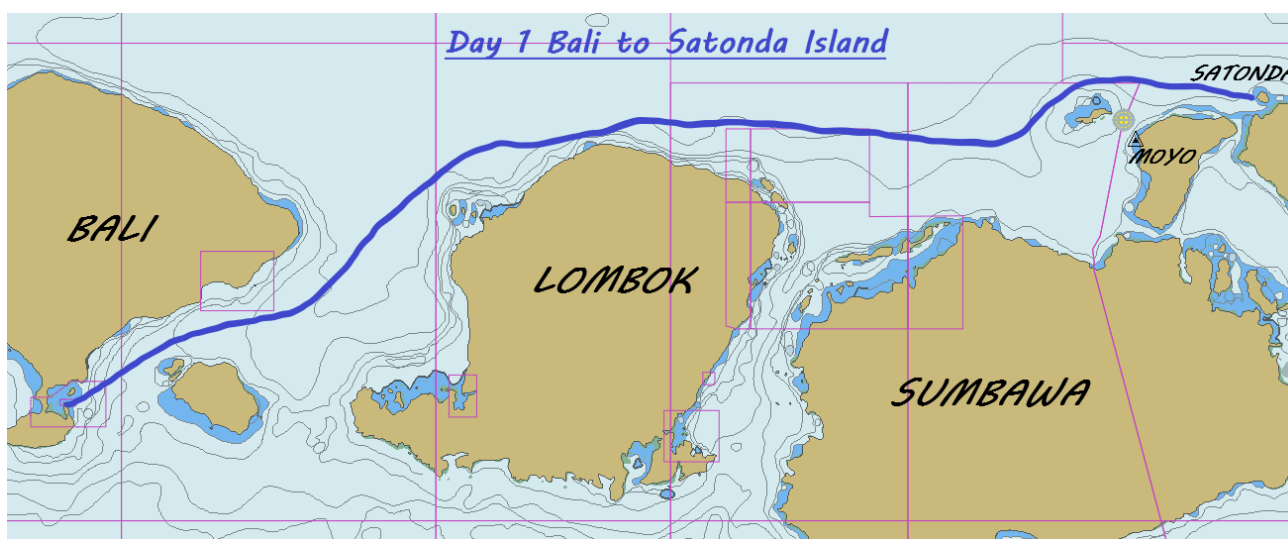
Saturday 14th September

Bali

This morning the group was at leisure to enjoy an extensive buffet breakfast by the pool, and explore the tropical grounds of the hotel – some wandered on the beach, others meandered around the various temples and vine-covered shrines alongside our rooms, while others enjoyed a relaxing massage in the spa.

At 12:15pm we were picked up from the hotel by Chas, our co-leader, and transferred to the marina where we boarded the Mermaid II – our home for the next 7 days! We were welcomed with drinks and listened to a welcome briefing from Nico, the onboard Dive Master who has expert knowledge of the various sites we would be snorkelling. We then settled down to lunch and, at 2pm, set sail north east from Bali, up through the Lombok Straits.

As we joined the channel between Bali and Lombok, we were sailing along the famous “Wallace Line”, where the great naturalist Alfred Wallace observed that it is between these two islands that Asian fauna (on Bali) suddenly gives way to Australasian fauna on Lombok – a key breakthrough which led to his joint discovery of the process of evolution with Charles Darwin. Greater Crested Terns could be seen flying over the waves, and people sat on the sofas on the boat’s ‘party deck’ enjoying the view over the sea. We were served an evening meal at 7pm and continued sailing through the night.



Day 7

Sunday 15th September

Satonda

When we woke up, we were sailing along the north coast of Lombok and shortly after breakfast saw our first dolphins of the trip! Common Bottlenose Dolphins were swimming not too far away from us, and we enjoyed watching their playful antics as they splashed and did a couple of leaps for us before swimming off to continue their morning business! Other species of interest were an Abbot’s Boobies, followed by a White-tailed Tropicbird, both sitting on the water. After lunch we saw a small group of Melon-headed Whales, members of the Blackfish family (which also includes Pilot Whales, Pygmy Killer Whales and Orca). As we continued sailing east we saw 30 boobies (Red-footed and Brown) which were circling over the waves. There were tuna feeding on

fish underneath them, which we could see splashing at the surface, and the boobies were taking the opportunity to catch any unfortunate fish chased to the surface and were leaping to escape the jaws of the tuna!

Later into the afternoon we saw another pod of Melon-headed Whales (about 50 of them) which were accompanied by Fraser's Dolphins. The Melon-headed Whales were fairly inactive, spending time gently loafing at the surface. This is because they're nocturnal, and it was the middle of the night for them! The Fraser's Dolphins however were happily playing in the surf, their pink bellies on show every they leapt out of the water. The rosy colouration seen on their undersides is due to them getting warm while being active; when they're leaping around they get a little flushed, and as the skin on their bellies isn't pigmented this can be seen.

We then arrived at Satonda, an island formed from an extinct volcano which now has a brackish lake in its crater, and went snorkelling on its external coral reef at 4:30pm for an hour. This was a wonderful snorkel, highlights included two sizeable cuttlefish, two octopus (ever-impressive contortionists which were successfully squeezing themselves between a seemingly impossibly small gap in a rock), three Lionfish which were free swimming out in the open, their fins spread out in display, a Blue-spotted Stingray and a Black-spotted Porcupinefish.

Once back on board we quickly moved the boat around to the other side of Satonda to be in position to, hopefully, see Sunda Fruit Bats leaving their roosts as the sun set. Once in position, through our binoculars we could see hundreds of black dots in the trees and, as the sun started to go down, they started flying over us in their hundreds as they left their roosts to go over to Sumbawa to feed. They choose to roost on Satonda, away from disturbance by humans, dogs and other animals which might predate them, but fly the short distance over to Sumbawa each evening to feed on the abundant fruit growing on the hillsides, which the far smaller island of Satonda cannot provide. The sun set and we had a wonderful view of the moon, with Jupiter shining brightly in the sky, and two of its moons visible through binoculars. Afterwards, Chas gave a presentation on volcanoes, giving insight into how the Indonesian archipelago had formed.

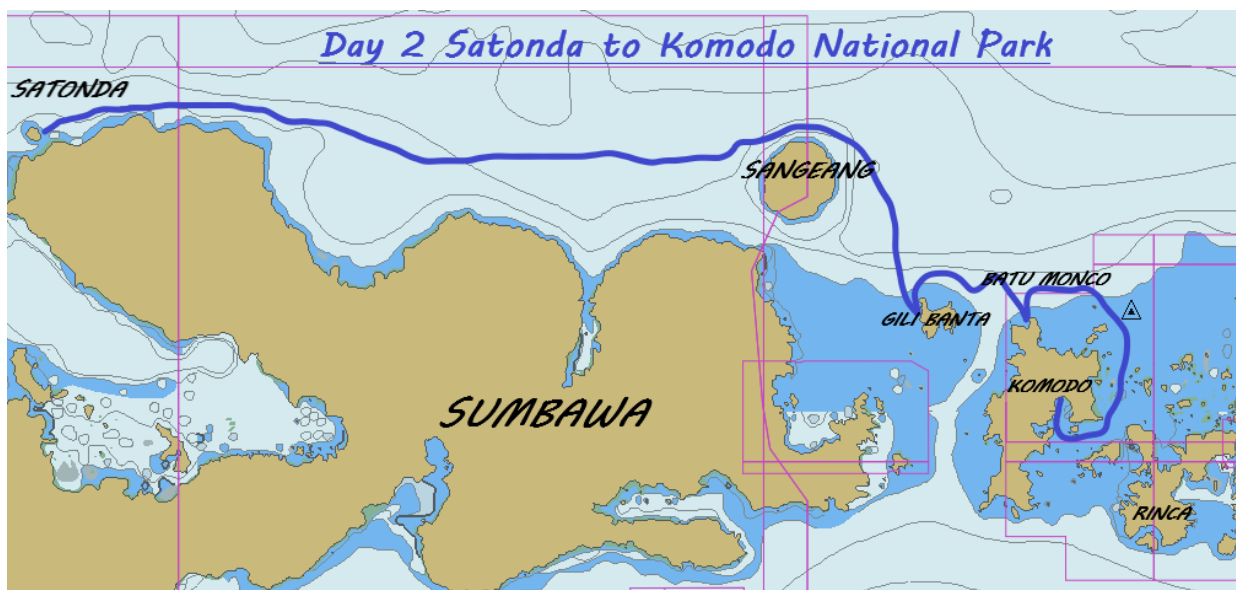
Day 8

Monday 16th September

Gili Banta to Komodo

This morning we woke to another stunning sunrise, and we saw a group of Melon-headed Whales at 8am, before arriving at Gili Banta for a snorkel at 8:30am. This crescent-shaped island is the remains of a collapsed volcano and the reef was extremely rich with life, the sun shining down onto the turquoise waters bringing the abundant, colourful coral to life. Ten minutes into the snorkel, our tranquil morning was interrupted by the shriek of 'Manta! Manta!' from Nico. We swam towards him to see a beautiful female Manta Ray swimming gracefully over the reef where she was getting cleaned by Cleaner Wrasse. Much to our excitement, after about 20 minutes of watching her, another, smaller, one turned up! This was a male, and they were both enjoying a thorough cleaning from the wrasse on the reef five metres or so below us. We were elated!

At 10am we reluctantly got out of the water and were welcomed back on board by the delicious smells of our 'big breakfast' (the 'smaller breakfast' having already been consumed at 7:30am!). We continued sailing east and encountered a group of Indo-Pacific Bottlenose Dolphins. They didn't show much interest in us, so after watching them for 10 minutes we continued on our way, happily watching passing Brown and Red-footed Boobies which were sitting on drifting logs, as well as rafts of Red Phalaropes bobbing on the water.



At midday we came across a group of Spinner Dolphins – these are nocturnal dolphins, but will leave sheltered waters during the day to swim with boats. As they swam alongside our bow we could clearly see their dark ‘dorsal cape’ (a dark patch of pigment on their backs) which protects them from sunburn. We enjoyed watching them for 15 minutes as they swam closely together in a group, 100 metres or so off the starboard bow, before continuing our journey.

In the afternoon we anchored in north-west Komodo and snorkelled at Datu Moncho (Marlene went diving with Chas). This turned out to be a spectacular snorkel – as we were happily pottering about the reef admiring the colourful coral and fish, FIVE Manta Rays then joined the group! We floated, totally mesmerised, as we watched them swim past us back and forth, as they fed in the plankton-rich waters on the reef. The dinghy driver counted 11 from his vantage point of sitting in the boat (easier to see than when in the water). It seemed we were surrounded! We were delighted, and spent an hour happily watching both them, and other wonderful marine life such as cuttlefish, lionfish, Eagle Rays, Moray Eels and Green Turtles – it was hard to know where to look!

We got back on board at 4:30pm to the lovely smell of banana cake which was fresh out of the oven, and waiting for us in the saloon (delicious!). Before dinner, the group met for a drink in the saloon and Sara ran over the checklist of species seen that day. Chas then gave an informative talk on some of the dolphins of Indonesia (Spotted, Spinner, Bottlenose and Melon-headed Whales). Afterwards we tucked into a delicious buffet for our evening meal, comprising rice, vegetables, spicy king prawn soup, chicken curry, grilled fish and tempeh (a soybean dish). While we were eating, the captain sailed us southwards, along the west coast of Komodo island, and anchored us in Log Liang, ready for our landing onto the island first thing tomorrow morning.

After dinner, we watched a documentary about Komodo Dragons, which provided a fascinating insight into the biology and lifestyle of these prehistoric creatures.

Day 9

Tuesday 17th September

Komodo Island

We awoke at 5:30am to enjoy our usual ‘small breakfast’ (toast, pastries, fruits, yogurts and tea and coffee) before landing onto Komodo Island at 7am – nice and early to benefit from the cooler temperatures of the day, which are not only more comfortable for exploring, but when wildlife would be more active. Large-billed Crows were

hopping about on the beach near the pier, and Green Imperial Pigeons were perched in the tops of trees around the beach. Daurian (Red-rumped) Swallows and a couple of Pacific Swallows were feeding overhead, as well as swooping close to the water, as we walked along the pier.

We met a ranger and started our guided walk – and it wasn't long before we saw our first Komodo Dragon – a baby, about 12 inches long, perched high up on the top of a free-standing tree trunk. When young, the dragons must keep to the safety of the trees, otherwise they will be predated by adult Komodo Dragons.

While we continued walking, we saw three Wild Boar which were rooting about in the leaf litter. Upon reaching a waterhole, we saw our second Komodo Dragon – a juvenile, about three years old, which was casually strolling out from the trees towards the small puddle of water near us. The group all got close-up views of this marvellous creature, as it stopped by the waterhole, very unconcerned by our presence, and lay down in the sun to warm up. Behind it was a male Green Junglefowl, looking resplendent in the morning light, as well as a Timor Deer browsing amongst the trees.

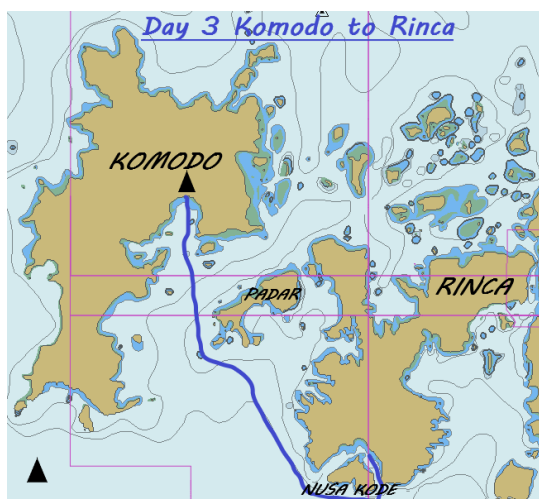
The group split into two – one group to go for a longer walk up to a view point over the island, and the second group choosing a slower-paced walk on flatter ground, enabling them to enjoy relaxed bird watching en route. Both groups saw Blue-tailed Bee-Eaters, Orange-footed Scrubfowl, Yellow-crested Cockatoo, Flores Spangled Drongo, Helmeted Friarbird, Black-naped Oriole, Barred Doves, Spotted Doves, Sunda Collared Dove, Collared Kingfishers and a lovely view of two roosting Moluccan Scops Owls. To add to this, the birdwatching group saw Tenggara Whistler, Flame-fronted Sunbird, Olive-backed Sunbird and an unidentified flycatcher.

Upon returning to the ranger station we saw five fully grown adult Komodo Dragons which were lazing about in the shade. One of them was very skinny – the ranger explained this was an elderly dragon. The others, however, seemed to have a clean bill of health! After admiring them for 20 minutes, some of the group visited the very small local market to buy some souvenirs, whilst others chose to opt for a fresh coconut in the shade and take in the scenery of Komodo Island. We got back on board the boat at 9:30am for breakfast.

As we sailed out of Loh Liang, Sara and Chas were scanning for cetaceans as always! There were fleeting glimpses of a couple of dolphins in the channel ahead of the boat, which were likely Indo-Pacific Bottlenose Dolphins, but they didn't appear again!

We sailed out into the open water south of Komodo, looking for cetaceans. However, the wind picked up and it was difficult to see any fins, so we slowly sailed north-east and entered Horseshoe Bay, on the south of Rinca (we had fleeting glimpses of dolphins as we entered the bay, again, probably Indo-Pacific Bottlenose). We then anchored and got into the RIBs and went the 200m over to a beach where two young (perhaps five years old) Komodo Dragons were resting. We watched them for 45 minutes, taking photos as they walked along the beach. There were two White-bellied Sea Eagles flying overhead, one of which perched on a nearby hill top. There was also a Sacred Kingfisher in a nearby tree.

We then got back on board to change and snorkel on a reef further along in the bay. This was a chilly snorkel (we were in Pacific waters now, not Indian Ocean) but it was amazing! We were mesmerised as we floated over non-stop soft corals. Highlights included a beautiful black and gold Ghost Pipefish, a Blue-spotted Stingray and Spotted Sweetlips.



After an hour (some stayed in for 1½hrs!) we got back on board for drinks and to watch a stunning sunset. It was Trisha's birthday, so there were roars of laughter as many of the group played board games on the 'party deck' and, after the checklist from Sara, Chas gave a talk on corals, helping us to understand the different types that we had seen during our snorkel, and giving us useful tips on what to look out for on our next swim the following morning. We then all enjoyed a lovely dinner (plus cake and candles for Trisha!) in the beautiful surroundings of Horseshoe Bay.

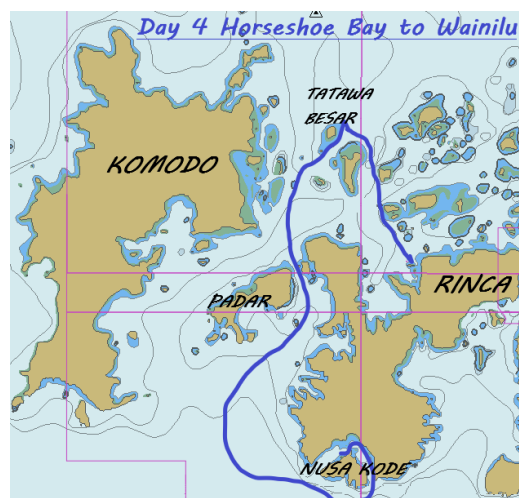
Day 10

Wednesday 18th September

This morning we had another snorkel within Horseshoe Bay, this time at a site called Nusa Kode on a reef called Criniod Canyon. This was a stunning reef with extremely colourful crinoids (marine plant-like animals in the same family as sea urchins and starfish, also known as 'sea lilies' or 'feather stars' – their name being derived from the Greek word 'krinon', (lily), and 'eidos', (form). We snorkelled alongside a beautiful vertical wall of stunning corals and sponges – this was certainly our most colourful snorkel yet! After an hour we reluctantly got out, dried off and discussed the wonderful morning over a delicious breakfast, the group all comparing notes on different things they had seen!

We then sailed south, out of Horseshoe Bay into open water, and it wasn't long before Sara spotted a pod of Common Bottlenose Dolphins. We slowly approached them, and they came on over to the boat to investigate us. Amongst the pod of dark-coloured dolphins we saw a dolphin with a larger dorsal fin and white scratches on its body – a Risso's Dolphin! As we scanned the water, we saw that there were indeed several Risso's Dolphins among the Bottlenoses, and even a few Fraser's Dolphins on the further side of the group. The group were delighted to be spoiled with views of three different species all in one go, and it was very useful to see them alongside each other, where Sara pointed out the key visual differences of colour and body shape between each species.

We then continued north, sailing in between Rinca and Padar, and enjoying the constantly-changing view of both of these islands moving past the window as we ate lunch! In the early afternoon we saw a group of Spinner Dolphins, but these individuals were feeling rather shy (or, more likely, sleepy!) and showed no interest in us, so we didn't bother them, and continued to Tatawa Besar where we anchored for snorkel. Once we were in, the group were happily pottering over this stunning coral garden, full of magnificent greens, yellows, purples, blues and reds. Then came the shout that always excites everybody... "MANTAAAAA!!!"



We couldn't believe our luck to have ANOTHER swim with Manta Rays – a huge four metre black Manta Ray was swimming slowly beneath us on the reef. There was a reasonable current, so we just happily drifted with it,

allowing it to gently carry us over the stunning coral garden without any effort from us at all! The group also saw several turtles (both Green and Hawksbill). Once we'd reached the end of the reef, the ever-attentive crew came to pick us up in the dinghies and quickly whizzed us back 'up current' to another section of reef, where we jumped back in again to continue exploring. We were so enchanted with the marine life on view that when it was time to get out we couldn't believe that we had been in for 1½ hours! What a fantastic afternoon!

Once back on board, we then cruised to Wainilu to anchor for the evening (Chas saw three shy Indo-Pacific Bottlenose Dolphins en route, but other than that there were no cetacean sightings). After the evening checklist from Sara, Chas gave a talk on the life of Alfred Russell Wallace, the famous British naturalist who spent many years studying the flora and fauna of Indonesia (as detailed in his book 'The Malay Archipelago'). We then tucked into another delicious evening meal (with guests passing round photos of Manta Rays and turtles from the afternoon!) and, quite tired from our exciting day, then headed to bed at 9:30pm. We would be landing on Rinca tomorrow morning for our third encounter with the dragons!

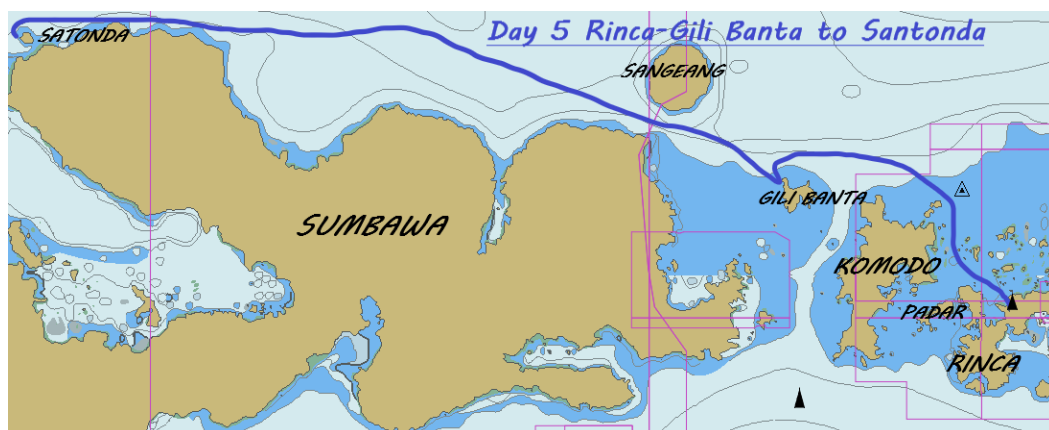
Day 11

Thursday 19th September

Rinca

This morning we left the boat at 6:45am to land on Rinca. Two Collared Kingfishers were calling nosily from the surrounding mangroves, and could be seen flying back and forth across the bay. We arrived at the ranger station and (in addition to the ranger) were met by six Komodo Dragons basking in the sun! Again, we split into two groups – a leisurely-paced group to stop for birds, flowers, take photos and to potter, the other group to go for a quicker-paced four km walk up to a view point. The 'hiking group' saw nice views of Wild Water Buffalo, and a lovely view of male Flame-breasted Sunbird. We came across a nesting Komodo Dragon which was using the old abandoned nest of the Orange-footed Scrubfowl to keep her eggs safe. These nests are huge (about 1.5 metres high and 3 metres across!) and we could also see 'diversionary nests', which the dragon had created in the nearby vicinity to confuse predators (pigs and other dragons) which would predate the eggs.

When we got back to base, some of the group bought fresh coconuts to drink/eat and perused the single market stall to purchase some souvenirs. We got back on board the boat at 9:15am, where we were welcomed by our daily 'big breakfast' (cooked eggs, bacon, pancakes in addition to cereals, pastries, fruit salad and toast!). We then started sailing west, stopping en route for a fantastic snorkel, the highlight of which was a chain of TWELVE Manta Rays swimming around and past the group! (Could it get any better?). While the group were snorkelling, Sara and Marlene went for a dive and saw countless fish, plus a lovely view of a Nurse Shark. That evening the 'party deck' was alive with excited chatter, as people relaxed over drinks, showing off their photographs to one another.

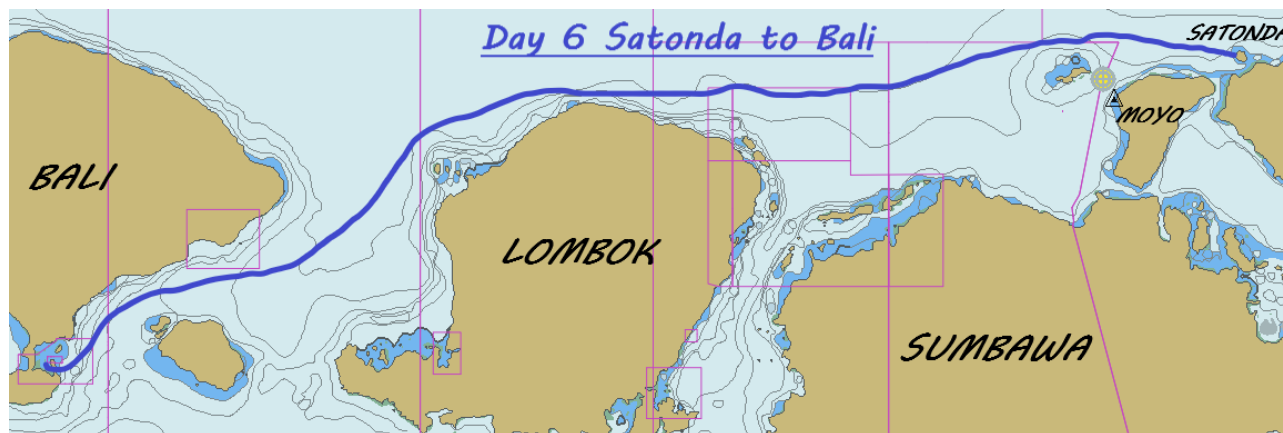


We then sailed through the night on our way back to Santonda, where we had seen the Fruit Bats on our second night on board.

Day 12

Friday 20th September

Satonda to Bali



This morning we woke at 6am at Satonda, and were onshore at 6:30am. Satonda is an island formed from an extinct volcano which now has a brackish lake in its crater. Upon arrival we saw several Imperial Green Pigeons perching in a tree, before walking over to the crater lake where there were three Little Grebes in the water. Some walked 15 minutes or so up a hill to a view point, en route seeing a Flores Spangled Drongo and Barred Doves, which could be heard cooing gently and were seen perched in branches amongst trees. As we walked, skinks (small, long-tailed lizards) scurried nosily amongst the bone-dry leaf litter. Those who were keen to do a final snorkel went back to the boat for a quick change and hopped in on the reef, while five others stayed on shore to enjoy a further leg stretch and some birdwatching. Highlights included Sunda Pygmy Woodpecker, Sooty-headed Bulbuls, Flores Spangled Drongo and a Black-fronted Flowerpecker, plus countless butterflies and lots of macaques!

Once back on board we sailed north west, out to sea, for a final day of searching for cetaceans. While we were having lunch, Sara found a group of Spotted Dolphins – they played for a few minutes before quickly swimming off again – it seemed they had business to attend to! As we continued sailing, we had a fantastic view of three Red-tailed Tropicbirds overhead, which distracted us while we were watching a Bridled Tern bobbing on some driftwood.

Late in the day at 5pm, we came across a large group of Melon-headed Whales, which were joined by lots of Fraser's Dolphins. They played around the bow, twisting on their sides and looking up at us, and they chose to stay with us for what seemed like an eternity (about an hour!). We could clearly see the white markings around the lips of the Melon-headed Whales, and the pink bellies of the Fraser's Dolphins. The sea was as calm as a mill pond – a mouth-watering palette of apricot and indigo – as the sun began to set. With the boat moving slowly, almost silently, in the water, the Melon-headed Whales playing around us and the hazy view of Mount Rinjani volcano on the horizon, we really couldn't have had a better send off.

At 7pm Jack (the onboard videographer) showed us the fantastic 20-minute film that he had made during our cruise. We sat munching on freshly-made popcorn, watching the wonderful footage of our encounters with dolphins, dragons and whales, and us snorkelling over stunning reefs and exploring the islands on shore.

After dinner, all of the crew came into the saloon where Sara gave a speech to thank them and the captain for making our cruise so wonderful. Afterwards, some decided to go and finish their packing while others stayed up chatting about the wonderful sightings on the trip.

Day 13

Saturday 21st September

LesBali to London

This morning we woke up at 6:30am for a leisurely breakfast and departed the boat at 8:30am for Denpasar airport where we freshened up in a very comfortable airport hotel, before catching our late afternoon flight back to London via Kuala Lumpur. As we took off we had a superb view over the island of Bali. Although all eyes were firstly drawn to the volcano, its most prominent landmark, we then turned our attention to the surrounding waters, and waved goodbye to the glorious coral reefs and secluded islands in which we had been so immersed for the last fortnight – a truly wonderful holiday!

Day 13

Saturday 21st September

Arrive back in London

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Evening drinks in the tower 12th sept (Sara Frost)

Species Lists

Cetaceans (✓=recorded but not counted)

	Common name	Scientific name	September										
			11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
1	Pan-tropical Spotted Dolphin	<i>Stenella attenuata</i>									✓	✓	
2	Spinner Dolphin	<i>Stenella longirostris</i>						✓		✓	✓		
3	Indo-pacific Bottlenose Dolphin	<i>Tursiops aduncus</i>						✓	Prob	✓	Poss		
4	Common Bottlenose Dolphin	<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>					✓	✓		✓			
5	Risso's Dolphin	<i>Grampus griseus</i>								✓			
6	Fraser's Dolphin	<i>Lagenodelphis hosei</i>					✓			Poss		✓	
7	Melon-headed Whale	<i>Peponocephala electra</i>					✓	✓				✓	
8	Dwarf Sperm Whale	<i>Kogia sima</i>									4 prob		

Other Mammals

1	Timor (=Javan) Deer	<i>Rusa timorensis</i>	✓	✓					✓		✓		
2	Long-tailed (=Crab-eating) Macaque	<i>Macaca fascicularis</i>	✓						✓		✓	✓	
3	Sunda Fruit Bat	<i>Pteropus sp.</i>	✓										
4	Plantain Squirrel	<i>Callosciurus notatus</i>	✓										
5	Wild Water Buffalo	<i>Bubalus bubalis</i>									✓		
6	Black Giant Squirrel	<i>Ratufa bicolor</i>	✓	✓									

Birds (H = heard only)

1	Orange-footed Scrubfowl	<i>Megapodius reinwardt</i>								✓		✓	✓
2	Green Junglefowl	<i>Gallus varius</i>		✓	✓					✓		✓	
3	Wilson's Storm Petrel	<i>Oceanites oceanicus</i>										✓	✓
4	Swinhoe's Storm Petrel	<i>Oceanodroma monorhis</i>					✓						
5	Bulwer's Petrel	<i>Bulweria bulwerii</i>					✓	✓	✓		✓		✓
6	Short-tailed Shearwater	<i>Puffinus tenuirostris</i>							✓				
7	Tricolored (Little) Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus tricolor</i>											✓
8	White-tailed Tropicbird	<i>Phaethon lepturus</i>						✓				Prob	
9	Red-tailed Tropicbird	<i>Phaethon rubricauda</i>											✓
10	Eastern Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus coromandus</i>		✓									

	Common name	Scientific name	September										
			11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
11	Striated Heron	<i>Butorides striata</i>									✓		
12	Javan Pond Heron	<i>Ardeola speciosa</i>				✓							
13	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>					✓						
14	Great-billed Heron	<i>Ardea sumatrana</i>			✓								
15	Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>				✓							
16	White-faced Heron	<i>Egretta novaehollandiae</i>							Prob				
17	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>		✓					✓				
18	Pacific Reef Heron	<i>Egretta sacra</i>				✓			✓	✓	✓		
19	Lesser Frigatebird	<i>Fregata ariel</i>						✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
20	Abbott's Booby	<i>Papasula abbotti</i>						✓					
21	Brown Booby	<i>Sula leucogaster</i>						✓			✓	✓	✓
22	Red-footed Booby	<i>Sula sula</i>						✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
23	Western Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>							✓	✓			
24	Brahminy Kite	<i>Haliastur indus</i>								✓			
25	Crested Serpent Eagle	<i>Spilornis cheela</i>			H								
26	White-bellied Sea Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucogaster</i>								✓		✓	✓
27	Black Eagle	<i>Ictinaetus malaiensis</i>		✓									
28	Changeable Hawkeagle	<i>Nisaetus cirrhatus</i>					✓						
29	White-breasted Waterhen	<i>Amaurornis phoenicurus</i>					✓						
30	Beach Stone-Curlew	<i>Esacus magnirostris</i>							Prob				
31	Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>					✓						
32	Marsh Sandpiper	<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>		✓									
33	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>			✓					✓			
34	Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>											
35	Red-necked Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>						✓		✓	✓		✓
36	Red Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus fulicarius</i>							✓				
37	Greater Crested Tern	<i>Thalasseus bergii</i>					✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
38	Little Tern	<i>Sternula albifrons</i>		✓		Poss	✓						
39	Bridled Tern	<i>Onychoprion anaethetus</i>					✓	✓					✓
40	Black-naped Tern	<i>Sterna sumatrana</i>										✓	
41	Arctic Skua	<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>						✓				✓	✓
42	Spotted Dove	<i>Spilopelia chinensis</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓			✓			

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			11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
43	Barred Dove	<i>Geopelia maugeus</i>		✓						✓		✓	
44	Emerald Dove	<i>Chalcophaps indica</i>			✓								
45	Green Imperial Pigeon	<i>Ducula aenea</i>								✓			✓
46	Pink-necked Green Pigeon	<i>Treron vernans</i>		✓	✓								
47	Orange-breasted Green Pigeon	<i>Treron bicinctus</i>			✓								
48	Sunda (Island) Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia bitorquata</i>		✓									
49	Zebra Dove	<i>Geopelia striata</i>		✓									
50	Grey-rumped Treeswift	<i>Hemiprocne longipennis</i>		✓									
51	Edible-nest Swiftlet	<i>Aerodramus fuciphagus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓						✓
52	Glossy Swiftlet	<i>Collocalia esculenta</i>		Prob									
53	Collared Kingfisher	<i>Todiramphus chloris</i>		✓		✓				✓		✓	
54	Sacred Kingfisher	<i>Todiramphus sanctus</i>		✓	✓					✓		✓	
55	Cerulean Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo coerulescens</i>			✓								
56	Blue-tailed Bee-Eater	<i>Merops philippinus</i>			✓					Prob		✓	
57	Chestnut-headed Bee-eater	<i>Merops leschenaulti</i>		✓									
58	Coppersmith Barbet	<i>Megalaima haemacephala</i>		✓									
59	Freckle-breasted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos analis</i>			✓								
60	Sunda Pygmy Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos moluccensis</i>											✓
61	Yellow-throated Hanging Parrot	<i>Loriculus pusillus</i>		✓									
62	Yellow-crested Cockatoo	<i>Cacatua sulphurea</i>								✓			
63	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	<i>Cacatua galerita</i>					✓						
64	Helmeted Friarbird	<i>Philemon buceroides</i>		✓						✓		✓	
65	Golden-bellied Gerygone	<i>Gerygone sulphurea</i>			✓								
66	White-breasted Woodswallow	<i>Artamus leucorhynchus</i>					✓						
67	Common Iora	<i>Aegithina tiphia</i>		✓	✓								
68	Small Minivet	<i>Pericrocotus cinnamomeus</i>		✓									
69	White-shouldered Triller	<i>Lalage sueurii</i>			✓								
70	Pied Triller	<i>Lalage nigra</i>		✓									
71	Javan Cuckooshrike	<i>Coracina javensis</i>		✓									
72	Rusty-breasted Whistler	<i>Pachycephala fulvotincta</i>								✓			
73	Long-tailed Shrike	<i>Lanius schach</i>	✓	✓	✓								
74	Black-naped Oriole	<i>Oriolus chinensis</i>								✓			

	Common name	Scientific name	September										
			11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
75	Flores Spangled Drongo	<i>Dicrurus densus</i>								✓			✓
76	Black Drongo	<i>Dicrurus macrocercus</i>		✓									
77	Ashy Drongo	<i>Dicrurus leucophaeus</i>		✓									
78	Greater Racket-tailed Drongo	<i>Dicrurus paradiseus</i>			✓								
79	Black-naped Monarch	<i>Hypothymis azurea</i>			✓								
80	Flores Crow	<i>Corvus florensis</i>								✓		✓	
81	Large-billed Crow	<i>Corvus macrorhynchos</i>								✓			
82	Javan Banded Pitta	<i>Hydornis guajana</i>			✓								
83	Cinereous Tit	<i>Parus cinereus</i>											✓
84	Yellow-vented Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus goiavier</i>		✓	✓		✓						
85	Sooty-headed Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus aurigaster</i>		Prob									✓
86	Pacific Swallow	<i>Hirundo tahitica</i>								✓			
87	Striated Swallow	<i>Cecropis striolata</i>								??			
88	Daurian (Red-rumped) Swallow	<i>Cecropis daurica striolata</i>								✓			
89	Black-winged Starling	<i>Acridotheres melanopterus</i>		✓									
90	Bali Starling (Myna)	<i>Leucopsar rothschildi</i>		✓									
91	Oriental Magpie-robin	<i>Copsychus saularis</i>		✓	✓								
92	Pied Bush Chat	<i>Saxicola caprata</i>										✓	
93	Black-fronted Flowerpecker	<i>Dicaeum igniferum</i>											✓
94	Scarlet-headed Flowerpecker	<i>Dicaeum trochileum</i>		✓	✓								
95	Olive-backed Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris jugularis</i>		✓	✓		✓			✓		✓	
96	Flame-breasted Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris solaris</i>								✓		✓	
97	Paddyfield Pipit	<i>Anthus rufulus</i>										✓	
98	Javan (Olive-backed) Tailorbird	<i>Orthotomus sepium</i>			✓	✓							
99	Javan Munia	<i>Lonchura leucogastroides</i>					✓						
100	Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>				✓							

Reptiles & Amphibians

1	Komodo Dragon	<i>Varanus komodoensis</i>							✓		✓		
2	Banded Sea-snake	<i>Colubrina laticauda</i>						✓			✓		
3	Green Turtle	<i>Chelonia mydas</i>						✓	✓	✓	Prob	✓	
4	Hawksbill Turtle	<i>Eretmochelys imbricata</i>								✓			

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			11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
6	Common Spiny Lizard	<i>Coletes versicolor</i>		✓							✓		
7	Two-striped Water Monitor	<i>Varanus salvator bivittatus</i>				✓							
8	Gliding Lizard	<i>Draco sumatranus</i>			✓	✓							

Fish (Sharks & Rays)

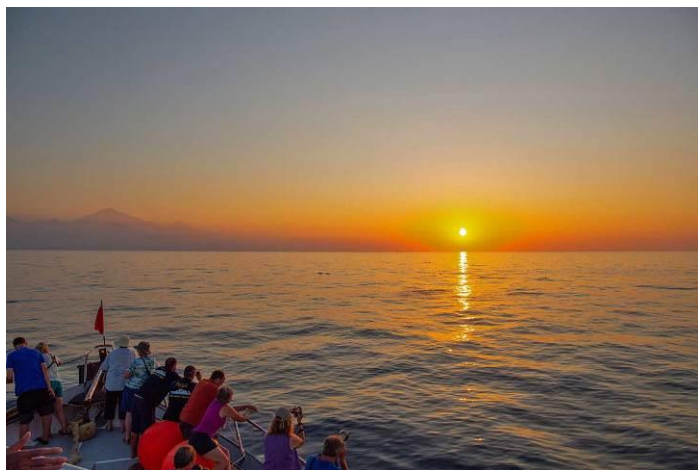
1	White-tip Reef Shark	<i>Triaenodon obesus</i>								✓			
2	Black-tip Reef Shark	<i>Carcharhinus melanopterus</i>		✓				✓					
3	Bamboo Shark	<i>Chiloscyllium sp.</i>							✓				
4	Reef Manta	<i>Manta alfredi</i>						✓		✓	✓	Prob	
5	Blue-spotted Stingray	<i>Taeniura lymma</i>					✓			✓			
6	Nurse Shark	<i>Ginglymostoma cirratum</i>									✓		
7	Spotted Eagle Ray	<i>Aetobatus narinari</i>											✓

Other species

1	Ocean Sunfish	<i>Mola mola</i>				✓	Prob						
2	Giant Moray Eel	<i>Gymnothorax javanicus</i>							✓				
3	Cuttlefish sp	<i>Sepiida sp</i>						✓	✓		✓	✓	



Bali Starling (Anne Woodington)



Group watching Melon-headed Whales (Sara Frost)



Grounds of Mecure Sanur Hotel(Sara Frost)