

THE 2-DAY KOMODO ISLAND RUN

An essential guide to hikes, dragons, and manta rays

First things first, you'll need to catch a quick flight from Bali over to Labuan Bajo. It's super easy and usually runs about ₹5,500 to ₹7,500 INR one-way.

My personal suggestion? Grab a cheap but comfortable hotel in Labuan Bajo for the night before your boat leaves. You can easily find solid places for ₹1,000 to ₹2,500 INR a night. It just takes all the stress out of your travel days and lets you explore the harbor town a bit.

For the main event—the 2-day, 1-night liveaboard boat—a standard budget shared cabin is going to cost roughly ₹13,500 to ₹17,000 INR per person. Just a heads up, you'll also need to keep around ₹3,000 INR in cash on you to cover the mandatory National Park entrance and ranger fees once you're out there.

Day 1: Hikes, Dragons, and Sunset Bats

You'll kick things off by boarding the boat in the morning and cruising out to Kelor Island. There's a bit of a hike here, and my personal suggestion is to just push through the sweat—the panoramic view at the top is completely worth it for the photos, and you can jump straight into the water to snorkel right after.

Next, you head to Rinca or Komodo Island to track down the dragons. Walking through the dry brush with a guide looking for apex predators is a pretty wild experience. Later, the boat drops anchor near Kalong Island just in time for sunset. Thousands of giant fruit bats fly right over the boat as the sky turns orange. It's honestly one of the coolest, most surreal moments of the trip. You'll eat dinner on deck and sleep on the boat that night.

Day 2: Viewpoints and Manta Rays

You'll want to wake up super early for this one. The boat docks at Padar Island, and you hike up to the famous viewpoint. My personal suggestion: definitely commit to the sunrise hike. Yes, you'll be dodging a bunch of people trying to get the exact same aesthetic shot—which is always pretty funny to watch—but the sweeping view of the three different colored beaches is unreal.

Afterward, you get to chill at Pink Beach. The sand is tinted by crushed red coral, and the water is incredibly clear. The rest of the afternoon is spent jumping straight off the boat at Manta Point to snorkel with massive manta rays, followed by a quick stop at Taka Makassar, which is basically just a tiny, pristine white sandbar floating out in the middle of the ocean. After that, it's a smooth, scenic sail back to the harbor in Labuan Bajo to wrap it all up!

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