# [Komodo Dragon](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/komodo-dragon/):

**Komodo Dragon Classification and**[**Evolution**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/evolution/)  
The Komodo Dragon is a large [species](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-species) of [lizard](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/lizard/) that is only found on a handful of [islands](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/islands/) in the Indonesian archipelago. Not known to the world until the First World War, the Komodo Dragon is actually a [species](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-species) of [Monitor Lizard](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/monitor-lizard/) that has been evolving in [island](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/islands/) isolation for millions years, which has led to it becoming very large indeed. The Komodo Dragon is not only the largest [lizard](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/lizard/)in the world, but it also one of the most aggressive and is so powerful that it is able to take [prey](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-prey) many times its own [size](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-size). However, Komodo Dragons are also in severe danger in their [natural environments](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-natural-environment) as hunting and [habitat](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-habitat) loss, along with a shortage of [prey](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-prey), has led to population declines on the few [islands](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/islands/) where they are found in the Komodo National Park, meaning that they are now listed on the IUCN's Red List and therefore have some legal protection.  
  
**Komodo Dragon**[**Anatomy**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/anatomy/)**and Appearance**  
The Komodo Dragon is an enormous [reptile](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-reptile) that can grow up to three meters long and weigh 150kg. They are incredibly strong and powerful with long, thick bodies, short, muscular legs and an almighty tail that is used for both fighting and for propping the [animal](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-animal) up when it is standing on its hind legs. The Komodo Dragon has long and sharp, curved claws that are often used for digging and its greyish brown skin is covered in small scales and folds around the neck. Komodo Dragons have relatively small heads compared to their large body [size](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-size) and wide, powerful jaws that conceal a mouth that is filled with deadly bacteria. Although the Komodo Dragon has good eyesight, the majority of its surroundings are sensed to smell which the Komodo Dragon does with its long and deeply forked tough. By flicking its tongue out of its mouth, the Komodo Dragon is able to "taste" scent particles in the air to locate both live and dead [prey](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-prey) up to 8km away.  
  
**Komodo Dragon Distribution and**[**Habitat**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-habitat)  
Although the Komodo Dragon would have once been widespread across many Indonesian [islands](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/islands/), they are today confined to just five which all lie in the Komodo National Park. The [islands](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/islands/)of Komodo, Rintja, Gillimontang, Padar and the western tip of Flores are the last remaining homes for these enormous [animals](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-animal) that are most commonly found in open woodlands along with dry savannah and on scrubby hillsides, and can also be found inhabiting dried-up river beds. It is thought that Komodo Dragons evolved to be so big on these [islands](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/islands/) due to the presence of a number of large mammalian [species](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-species) that have since gone [extinct](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/endangered/extinct/). Today however, they are becoming more [threatened](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/endangered/threatened/) in their [natural environments](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-natural-environment) with the loss of their [habitats](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/habitats/) to deforestation for timber has pushed the last remaining populations into smaller and more isolated regions.  
  
**Komodo Dragon**[**Behaviour**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/behaviour/)**and**[**Lifestyle**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-lifestyle)  
The Komodo Dragon is a solitary and powerful [predator](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-predator) that roams a [territory](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-territory) which is dependent on the individual's [size](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-size), with the average adult covering a distance of around 2km every day. They are also known to be excellent swimmers, travelling from one [island](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/islands/) to another over a relatively long distance. Although they are solitary [animals](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-animal), a number of Komodo Dragons will often gather around a single kill with smaller individuals normally having to give way to the larger ones. In [order](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-order) to catch such large [animals](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-animal), Komodo Dragons can sit for hours hidden in the vegetation and are well camouflaged by their grey-brown skin as they sit waiting for a [prey](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-prey)[animal](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-animal) to pass by. The Komodo Dragon then ambushes its victim with incredible speed and force. Although the majority of initial attacks are successful, if the [animal](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-animal) somehow manages to escape then the bacteria transferred from the Komodo Dragon's mouth in the bite-would, causes the flesh to become septic and kills the [prey](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-prey) within 24 hours.  
  
**Komodo Dragon**[**Reproduction**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-reproduction)**and Life Cycles**  
Besides when feeding on a large carcass, Komodo Dragons can also be seen in the company of one another during the breeding season when, in September, nearby males fight one another by standing on their hind legs and propped up by their tails, try to win the right to breed with the local females. After mating, the female Komodo Dragon lays up to 25 leathery eggs in a hole that she digs into the soft sand. The young hatch after an [incubation period](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-incubation-period) that lasts for between 8 and 9 months and are boldly marked with cream bands (which they lose as they get older), and are completely independent from when they leave their shell. However, until they grow to a larger [size](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-size), young Komodo Dragons will venture up into the trees where they will spend most of their time until they are big enough to look after themselves on the ground. Komodo Dragons tend to live for an average of 30 years in the wild.  
  
**Komodo Dragon**[**Diet**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/diet/)**and**[**Prey**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-prey)  
The Komodo Dragon is a carnivorous [animal](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-animal) that only hunts and kills large [animals](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-animal) in [order](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-order) to survive in its natural surroundings. Adult Komodo Dragons are able to kill [prey](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-prey) much larger than themselves as even if they are not successful at killing it on ambush, they will then follow it for miles until it eventually dies of the blood-poisoning caused by the deadly bacteria in the Komodo Dragon's mouth. Large [mammals](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-mammal) make up the bulk of the Komodo Dragon's [diet](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/diet/) including [Pigs](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/pig/), [Goats](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/goat/), [Deer](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/deer/) and even [Horses](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/horse/) and [Water Buffalo](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/water-buffalo/) (all of which have been introduced to the [islands](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/islands/)by people). Young Komodo Dragons however, [prey](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-prey) on smaller [animals](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-animal) in the trees such as [Snakes](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/snake/), [Lizards](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/lizard/) and [Birds](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/bird/). The teeth of the Komodo Dragon are sharp and serrated but they mean that this [animal](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-animal) cannot chew. Instead they tear bits off the carcass and throw it backwards into their mouths, able to swallow it whole aided by their flexible neck muscles.  
  
**Komodo Dragon**[**Predators**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-predators)**and Threats**  
Due to the fact that the Komodo Dragon is the most dominant [predator](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-predator) in its [environment](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-environment), mature adults have no natural [predators](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-predators) in their native [habitats](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/habitats/). The smaller and more [vulnerable](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/endangered/vulnerable/)young however, seem to have adapted to spending their initial days in the trees to avoid being eaten by larger Komodo Dragons. Since the arrival of people on these [islands](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/islands/) though, things have changed dramatically with [Humans](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/human/) having hunted the Komodo Dragons and encroaching on their native [habitats](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/habitats/) with their growing settlements and forest clearance for both timber and agriculture. Komodo Dragons are also [threatened](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/endangered/threatened/) by volcanic activity on these geologically active [islands](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/islands/) which can cause declines in their [prey](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-prey) [species](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-species), in turn affecting the local Komodo Dragon populations.  
  
**Komodo Dragon Interesting Facts and Features**  
The Komodo Dragon is known to have fifty different [types](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-types) of toxic bacteria in their saliva that thrive on traces of flesh, causing bite-wounds to become quickly infected. Recent research however, indicates that the real reason for such a high success rate in poisoning its [prey](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-prey) could be down to the fact that the Komodo Dragon may have a venom gland in its mouth. Although Komodo Dragons have thrived in this part of the Indonesian archipelago for millions of years, they were not known to the world until around a century ago when reports came in from a pilot that swam to Komodo [Island](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/islands/) after his plane went down. The immense [size](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-size) of the Komodo Dragon is thought to come from the fact that they would have once hunted large [mammals](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-mammal) that would have then existed in [Indonesia](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/location/asia/indonesia/), including a [species](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-species) of Pygmy [Elephant](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/elephant/) which is thought to have now been [extinct](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/endangered/extinct/) for thousands of years. This means that the main [prey](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-prey) of the Komodo Dragon today, has all been introduced to the [islands](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/islands/) by [Human](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/human/) settlers.  
  
**Komodo Dragon Relationship with**[**Humans**](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/human/)  
Since their discovery on the [islands](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/islands/) in the Komodo National Park around 100 years ago, Komodo Dragons have both fascinated and utterly terrified people as we learn more and more about them. [Habitat](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-habitat) loss on the [islands](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/islands/) has not only meant that Komodo Dragons are being pushed into increasingly isolated regions, but they are also being brought into closer contact with [Human](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/human/) activity and are known to kill livestock on occasion. Despite their seemingly slow and docile nature, Komodo Dragons can run at speeds of up to 11mph in short bursts and are actually one of the world's known "man-eaters". People have not only been ambushed, bitten and then tracked by Komodo Dragons in the wild but they have also been known to attack [Humans](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/human/)when they are kept in captive [environments](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-environment) and either escape or are allowed to get too close.  
  
**Komodo Dragon**[**Conservation Status**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-conservation-status)**and Life Today**  
Today, the Komodo Dragon is listed by the IUCN as a [species](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-species) that is [Vulnerable](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/endangered/vulnerable/) in its [natural environment](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-natural-environment) and therefore potentially faces extinction in the near future. Although once widespread on numerous Indonesian [islands](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/islands/) that they are now confined to just a few with between 3,000 and 5,000 individuals thought to be left roaming the rich, volcanic forests. Increasing interest in them from the tourist industry though has meant that local people have more reason to try and protect them and the handful of [habitats](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/habitats/) where they still survive.

# Komodo Dragon Facts:

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| [**Kingdom**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-kingdom)**:** | Animalia |
| [**Phylum**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-phylum)**:** | Chordata |
| [**Class**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-class)**:** | Reptilia |
| [**Order**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-order)**:** | Squamata |
| [**Family**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-family)**:** | Varanidae |
| [**Genus**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-genus)**:** | Varanus |
| [**Scientific Name**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-scientific-name)**:** | Varanus komodoensis |
| [**Common Name**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-common-name)**:** | Komodo Dragon |
| [**Other Name(s)**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-other-names)**:** | Komodo Monitor |
|  | |
| [**Group**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-group)**:** | Reptile |
| [**Number Of Species**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-number-of-species)**:** | 1 |
| [**Location**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-location)**:** | Komodo National Park |
| [**Habitat**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-habitat)**:** | Open woodland and hillsides |
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| [**Colour**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-colour)**:** | Grey, Brown, Cream, Grey |
| [**Skin Type**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-skin-type)**:** | Scales |
| [**Size (L)**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-size)**:** | 2m - 3.1m (6.6ft - 10.3ft) |
| [**Weight**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-weight)**:** | 70kg - 150kg (150lbs - 300lbs) |
| [**Top Speed**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-top-speed)**:** | 18kph (11mph) |
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| [**Diet**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-diet)**:** | Carnivore |
| [**Prey**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-prey)**:** | Pigs, Deer, Water Buffalo |
| [**Predators**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-predators)**:** | Humans |
|  | |
| [**Lifestyle**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-lifestyle)**:** | Diurnal |
| [**Group Behaviour**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-group-behaviour)**:** | Solitary |
|  | |
| [**Lifespan**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-lifespan)**:** | 25 - 40 years |
| [**Age Of Sexual Maturity**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-age-of-sexual-maturity)**:** | 5 years |
| [**Incubation Period**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-incubation-period)**:** | 8 -9 months |
| [**Average Litter Size**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-average-litter-size)**:** | 20 |
| [**Name Of Young**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-name-of-young)**:** | Pup |
| [**Age Of Independence**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-age-of-independence)**:** | On hatching |
|  | |
| [**Conservation Status**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-conservation-status)**:** | Vulnerable |
| [**Estimated Population Size**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-estimated-population-size)**:** | 3,000 - 5,000 |
| [**Biggest Threat**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-biggest-threat)**:** | Hunting and habitat loss |
|  | |
| [**Most Distinctive Feature**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-distinctive-features)**:** | Long and deep forked tongue to taste the air |
| [**Fun Fact**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-fun-fact)**:** | Only found on five Indonesian islands! |