

Costa Rica

– the perfect sport fishing destination?

As a travelling fisherman, Tony Orton is always looking for destinations that tick all the sport fishing boxes and provide his clients with a truly amazing fishing experience. Costa Rica has proven to be one such place...

I have fished many destinations, but am always being drawn back to Costa Rica, which sits nicely between Panama and Nicaragua in Central America. The country is blessed with coasts on two different oceans; the southern side faces the Pacific Ocean, while to the north the rain forests run down to the Caribbean Sea. Both coastlines offer completely different and exciting sport-fishing opportunities.

Due to its location and the towering volcanos and inland highlands, the trade winds from the Caribbean side of Costa Rica cannot make it through to the Pacific side, which experiences mostly calm, glass-like conditions during the peak fishing months of the dry season (December to May). This makes Costa Rica the perfect location for a sport-fishing holiday, knowing you have a better than 95 per cent chance that no fishing days will be cancelled due to bad weather. Next, add: a purpose-built marina set up for sport fishing; a ridiculous number of billfish swimming off its coast; a charter fleet that boasts quality boats and highly skilled crews that specialise in dead bait,

Roosterfish are on most travelling angler's bucket list. Josh Worthington with a nice example.



tease and switch dredge-style fishing; quality restaurants and great accommodation, and Costa Rica is obviously a superb fishing holiday destination.

The main drawcard enticing anglers to Costa Rica would surely be the sailfish and marlin fishing. Crews set out early and normally return to the docks late in the day after successfully catching and releasing a good number of fish. A normal day sees five-20 sailfish and a shot or two at blue marlin. Some days, when the bite is red-hot, boats can catch well over 50 sails in one day. As for those who prefer chasing marlin, the boats that make overnight trips to the seamounts and offshore FADs can release over 20 blue marlin in single day. Normally the private boats make the long 150-kilometre trip out to the seamounts, but more and more charter boats are making the effort these days, too.

With all this action going on offshore, Costa Rica's stunning inshore sports fish sometimes get overlooked. Pretty much all the Pacific coastline is home to roosterfish. This amazing looking and hard-fighting fish should be very high on every angler's bucket list. Watching a rooster rise up on a live bait or stick bait is a sight you'll never forget, with the frills popping up like a billfish's dorsal, indicating it's in full hunting mode. The bite is normally spectacular.

While fishing these inshore areas for roosterfish, it is not uncommon to be smashed up by the dirty-fighting cubera snapper. The power of these fish is out of this world: a violent bite is followed by a blistering run as the cubera heads towards the first underwater cave or rock it can find to try and break you off. These fish can grow over 35kg in weight, making it one serious 'snapper'!

With all this action taking place on the Pacific coast, the slightly more remote Caribbean coast is off the radar for most visiting anglers. That's a real shame, as the main river that separates Nicaragua and Costa Rica boasts some of the best tarpon fishing in the world! The tarpon would have to be the king of game fish: difficult to hook, and then, when you do, they provide aerial displays and blistering surface runs that show up any weaknesses in your equipment or angling skills. The average size for tarpon in Costa Rica is around 30kg and peaking well over 100kg.

Most visitors going to Costa Rica to fish for tarpon get a charter flight from San Jose to the fishing lodges on the edge of the Rio Colorado River. Most of the tarpon fishing is done in the ocean just outside the river mouths, where huge schools of bait gather.

While on the Caribbean side, there is also the inland fishing. Go up these river systems to hidden lakes and swamplands surrounded by rain forest. These areas are stunning: no pollution, no rubbish and – it often seems – no human life. The only noise while drifting along and casting are the calls of howler monkeys and birds high in the trees.

This river system is full of tasty snook and stunning rainbow bass, and to me is one of the hidden gems of Costa Rica.



Top: Sailfish are Costa Rica's big drawcard, and when the bite is hot, it is not uncommon to encounter 50 fish a day.

Above: Costa Rica offers snapper fishing the likes of which you have never experienced before. Bea Bagnall with an armful of cubera snapper.

'Some days, when the bite is red-hot, boats have can catch well over 50 sails in one day'



Left: Noted for their aerial displays and spectacular bite, mahimahi are a common catch in Costa Rica waters.
 Right: Facilities and charter boats working out of Los Suenos Marina are up there with the best in the world.

What makes Costa Rica even more special is that the government understands the value of sports fishing, so is helping the local people look after this amazing fishery. It is therefore a catch-and-release fishery for billfish, roosterfish and tarpon. Every year it seems the tournaments are releasing more fish than the year before, and it's not uncommon for a tournament fleet of 35 boats to catch over 800 sailfish in a single day.

To get to Costa Rica from New Zealand, you take the overnight flight to Los Angeles and then an evening flight from Los Angeles down to San Jose, Costa Rica. If basing yourself on the Pacific side, a 1.5-hour shuttle ride to Jaco or Quepos is needed.

What more can I say? Amazing fishing, friendly people, quality boats and crews, great food, stunning accommodation, and a

government and people that pride themselves on looking after their beautiful country... Costa Rica should be on every angler's bucket list!



If you are interested in fishing Costa Rica, Tony Orton from Offshore Adventures and Grant Dixon from NZ Fishing News will be hosting two trips to Los Suenos Marina in 2016 targeting sailfish and marlin. The trips are scheduled for April 22-29 and April 30 to May 7. Each trip includes five days of fishing, airport transfers, lunches while fishing and accommodation. If you need more info, please contact Tony at info@offshoreadventures.net or Grant Dixon at grant.dixon@fairfaxmedia.co.nz.

SAFE ON EVERYTHING EXCEPT RUST

Metal Rescue RUST REMOVER BATH
 1 - U.S. Gallon (3.78 LITERS)

"I'm Frank Fritz, I'm a workshop Hero and I PICK with Metal Rescue to remove rust from old car parts, sing, motorcycles, bikes and even metal toys."

Frank Fritz - American Picker

Exclusive to: **MITRE 10**
 Visit www.workshophero.co.nz for more information

WORKSHOP HERO
 Rust Removal/Rust Prevention products are clean, safe, and easy to use.

DRIES TO THE TOUCH!

8820172A

PROTECT YOUR INVESTMENT
 WITH A HIGH QUALITY COVER FROM

COVER WORLD
 (NEW ZEALAND) LTD

Made for New Zealand conditions.

5 YEAR GUARANTEE
 AGAINST MATERIAL DETERIORATION www.coverworldnz.com

We use our OWN top quality "OCEAN PRIDE" material on which we offer you a **FIVE YEAR GUARANTEE** against significant material deterioration. We value our customers and their valuable vehicles.

New fully trailerable semi custom cut covers for:

- Hard Top boats, zip access available
- Bimini Top boats zip access available with/without rocket launchers
- Cuddy and runabout Boats
- T Top boats
- Full leg motor covers
- Jet ski covers
- Kayak / canoe covers
- Anchors galvanised & stainless steel

We know what you need!

We'll not be beaten on our quality/price combination

CALL AND ORDER YOUR NEW COVER NOW
PH Roger 09 534 4478
 Available to 9.00pm and weekends / holidays
coverworldnz@yahoo.com - www.coverworldnz.com