

400 pounders caught every year.

**DORADO** More properly known as dolphin, these colorful gamesters are most abundant from late May through October when the seasonal rains flood the rivers, carrying out debris that forms trash lines close inshore that they like to lie under. Troll past a floating log and you'll likely hook a dorado.

**WAHOO** The first showing begins about the time the rains start in May, peaking in July and August. Most are caught around the rocky points and islands, but you will pick one up occasionally fishing offshore.

**ROOSTERFISH** Available all year, but there are more caught in the Papagayo Bay area from November through March. That may be because more boats in the northernmost area of this region are fishing inshore during those windy months, and the roosters like the structure of the shoreline and islands where they're found in 50 to 60 feet of water.

### Central Pacific

**Cabo Blanco to Drake Bay** Quepos is the center of fishing on the central coast, but there are charters available out of Puntarenas, the resorts at the southern end of Nicoya Peninsula, Jacó Beach, Punta Leona and at Drake Bay. Billfish are the target



PHOTO COURTESY OF COSTA RICA OUTDOORS

of most visiting anglers, and they are seldom disappointed from around December through April. Some sails and marlin are taken throughout the year. From most areas mentioned above, it's no more than a 12 to 20 miles run to the blue water where most of the billfish action is encountered. Inshore sport includes tuna, roosterfish, wahoo, dorado, jacks, mackerel, cubera, a variety of small snapper species and even snook. The snook can be taken trolling just outside the breaker line off the river mouths in the area, but are more often fished from shore. Some boats out of Quepos also offer multi-day trips to the Drake Bay and Caño's Island\* area, overnights at one of the several lodges centered around Drake Bay. This region is best known for its wahoo, big cubera and roosterfish, but there are also tuna, dorado, sails and some marlin.

### Seasons

**MARLIN** October is normally the top month for marlin in this area, but action is also good in September and November and occasional blues and rare blacks are likely to be found anytime of year although they are usually out further than the boats hunting for sailfish are likely to be fishing.

**SAILFISH** Middle of December to the end of April - when they begin moving north - is rated the best season, but the big schools often move in about October and occasionally stay longer. A few sails always show among the catch from June through September, mixed with the other species that are found inshore during those months.

**TUNA** Found throughout the year as they are all along the Pacific coast, but most abundant from about June through September. Most are the eight to 12 pounders, but a dozen or more over 200

pounds and maybe another two dozen in the 100 to 200 pound range are taken every year.

**WAHOO** Not common in the area around Quepos, but more abundant in the late summer further south, especially the Drake Bay and Caño's Island\* area from late June to early August.

**DORADO** Best action begins with the winter rains that start in late May and wash debris from the river mouths creating the inshore trash lines that the dolphin favor.

**ROOSTERFISH** Fishing for this hard-hitting inshore species is incredible, with the best spots off the river mouths and the rocky dropoffs. Favored spots are the mouth of the Parrita; Palo Seco between Parrita and Damas; just outside Damas; off the mouth of the Naranjo River; around the points at Dominical and throughout the Drake Bay and Caño's Island\* area. Best fishing is from June through early September.

**SNOOK** Favored spots are just off the many river mouths all along the coast, up the Sierpe river and in the big lagoon on the Sierpe. The IGFA world record Pacific black snook was taken in the month of July at the mouth of the Rio Naranjo on a boat trolling just outside the breaker line. This is a relatively new target for some small charter boats, but the best months seem to be from July through November during the heavy rainy season.

### Southern Pacific Golfito & Playa Zancudo

Golfito is the largest town on Costa Rica's southern coast, but there are only a half dozen operators scattered between the northern end of Dulce Gulf, the town of Golfito, Puerto Jiménez on the Osa Peninsula and Zancudo beach. Zancudo is a narrow peninsula with miles of beach on the ocean side and bordered by several rivers on the other. Expect to raise a dozen or more sails



PHOTO COURTESY OF JERRY RAINOV

and likely a marlin or two outside Matapalo Cape during peak season, and plenty of jacks, runners, mackerel, amberjack, roosterfish and big snapper inshore. There are two modern marinas in Golfito, both offering fishing charters as well as facilities for transient yachts. Light tackle fishing inside Dulce Gulf, with its profusion of small coves and rocky islets and shoreline, is also good for small barracuda and snapper, corvina and occasional snook to over 40 pounds. Fishing the dropoff outside Matapalo Cape they get sails, marlin, tuna and other blue water species, and inshore there are roosters that average over 30 pounds, grouper, jacks, barracuda, trophy size Pacific cubera snapper and more.

There is also excellent snook fishing inside the Zancudo Peninsula, and further north, at the mouth of the Esquinas river.

### Seasons

**MARLIN** August through December is the peak season, but an occasional striped, blue or black may be taken most any month if the water temperature is up.

**SAILFISH** A few taken off and on year round with best fishing from December through March. It often slows from April into early June, then picks up again and peaks in August and September.

**TUNA** Best fishing for the 100 pound and up yellowfin corresponds with marlin and sailfish season, but the schools of up to 30 pound tuna can nearly always be found outside.

**Seasons**

**DORADO** Best runs are traditionally from late May through October, when the rivers are running full.

**WAHOO** Not abundant, but occasional fish may be taken most any time of the year while trolling offshore for billfish or around the structure off Matapalo Cape.

**ROOSTERFISH** The region is famous for its big roosters and they can be caught virtually any month of the year.

**SNOOK** All year, but best from mid or late May through July and in January and February.

### Caribbean Coast

Fishing along Costa Rica's Caribbean coast can vary more from one day to another than from month to month. Historically, tarpon fishing has been promoted by the lodges on Costa Rica's east coast during the dry season from about December through mid May, while snook traditionally peak from about September through November. But the fish are there year round, and it's mostly a matter of weather, which can change overnight. If the river drops or the surf is low enough to let you outside the river mouth, it's likely you'll catch fish. There are a lot of flat days in October and November when tarpon are abundant, and some of the best fishing has consistently been in June and July.

All of the lodges offer complete packages, including hotel nights in San José, air transportation, meals, boats and guides. There are no roads into the area, and access is via the in-country airlines, charter flights, or boat through the Tortuguero Canal system from Limón.

**KINGFISH, SPANISH AND CERO MACKEREL, JACK CREVALLE, BARRACUDA** Abundant close to shore anytime the ocean is flat.

### Seasons

**TARPON** They're always around, with traditional high season from December through May, but that was a number of years

ago when all of the lodges were fishing with 16-foot boats and couldn't get outside the river mouths as they do today with larger boats designed for that purpose.

**SNOOK** Big snook generally peak from March through May and again September through the end of November.

**FAT SNOOK** (Calba) Peak from mid-November through late January, but often make an appearance much earlier.

**BILLFISH** When you can get outside to the blue water you will find Atlantic sailfish and occasional Atlantic blue marlin most anytime of the year. Most are caught from February through September.

**WAHOO** Plentiful on the outside from early February through mid June.

**DORADO** Caught just outside the river mouths throughout the year. Best fishing is when the runoff carries out the debris that forms inshore trash lines.

**TRIPLETAIL** January through June.

**KINGFISH, SPANISH AND CERO MACKEREL, JACK CREVALLE, BARRACUDA** Abundant close to shore anytime the ocean is flat.



PHOTO COURTESY OF STEVE KYLE LARSEN

Take a pacific coast

Cram with marlin and sailfish

Add an atlantic coast

Season with tarpon and snook

Throw in a few good friends

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