

# Angler's Guide to Guatemala

The GreatSailfishing Company

# 2011/2012



## The Great Sailfishing Company

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## Introduction

### Anglers (Survival) Guide to fishing and staying in Guatemala

[The GreatSailfishing Company](#) has been operating in Guatemala now for 8 seasons. Some of you may recall the original “Fins and Feathers” Inn that really pioneered Guatemala as a destination many years ago. They ceased operating in Guatemala 5 years ago – focusing instead on Panama/Galapagos.

Since those days, much has changed – and much has stayed the same!

In the “old days” the sportfishing fleet started the day by “Shooting the inlet” – and it really was a hairy way to start the day. Captains still tell stories today of mistimed runs through the large standing waves that have caused many a cup of coffee to be spilled over guests – and in at least one case for the whole flybridge bulwark to be ripped from its footings and rack up over \$50k in damages !

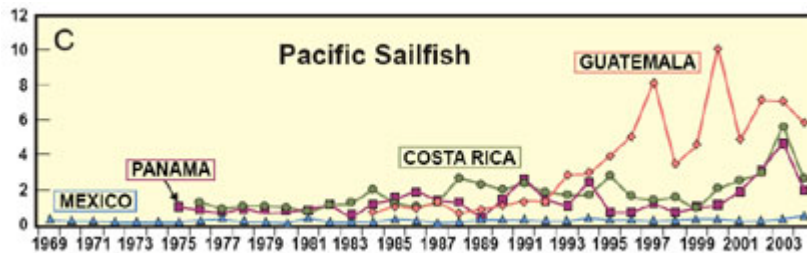
Since then, the fleet has moved to the safe and secure new “Marina Pez Vela” which is located inside Puerto Quetzal. The facilities are good – but most importantly the harbor itself provides excellent protection from the seas and anything that Mother Nature can throw at it. Entry to the harbor is through a wide and well engineered pile driven jetty leg that precludes and strong current buildup or waves – a calm entry to the Pacific Ocean, and more importantly a calm and safe return.

Guatemala is still a lesser known destination, and still viewed as “pioneering” to many in the billfishing world. Chances are you will be the first of your circle to consider fishing down here – so the intent of this guide is to give you a realistic idea of what to expect and some insights into the workings of the sportfishing fleet.

There are many places in the world that call themselves the “Sailfish Capital of the World” among them Martin County and Islamorada in Florida, USA; Mazatlan and Manzanillo in Mexico; Broome in Australia, Puerto Quetzal in Guatemala and Quepos in Costa Rica. To aspire to such a lofty title means there are probably more sailfish in that area than anywhere else in the world, during the year. All of these tourist destinations certainly do have sailfish but let’s see if we can convince you that the Pacific Coast of Guatemala is really THE place to catch and

release Pacific Sailfish.

To reinforce the claim of Guatemala truly being the Sailfish capital of the world, below is a chart from the US Department of Commerce that depicts catch per unit of effort (CPUE) in number of fish per angler day reported by region from 1969 to 2004.



Source: Bill fish newsletter produced by US Department of Commerce, NOAA.

Guatemala has quickly built a justifiably great reputation as a mecca for anglers seeking non-stop sailfish action – whether on the fly, light tackle or conventional ! It is still a relatively small destination compared to some of its neighbours such as Mexico and Costa Rica, but the catch rates speak for themselves. If your trip is about defining and honing your skills pursuing consistent 100lb+ billfish, then Guatemala should be your destination of choice.

Year after year Guatemala has consistent numbers of rises, bites and releases, all recorded and reported, backed up with testimonials from satisfied anglers that agree we are the Sailfish Capital of the World. Of course we are biased since our company is based in Guatemala and while true that statistics about anything in Guatemala tend to be suspect, any brief search over the Internet, in fishing magazines, cable or TV fishing shows and newspaper columns will provide figures that say pretty much the same thing: catches of over 25 sailfish per day are common, double and triple hookups are common, on average between 15 and 22 sailfish are caught and released per boat, per day; fishing is good year round, etc. Local boat captains with conservative estimates affirm that between 1000 and 1400 sailfish are caught and released, per boat, per year, using conventional tackle and bait. Boat captains that go out more place that number around 2000. On the Pacific Ocean, Guatemala has a small sports fishing boat fleet...few boats are catching plenty fish.

The coastline and ecosystem support vast quantities of bait year round and warm eddies hold large pods of sailfish between 2 and 50 miles from port. Guatemala holds many official (and unofficial !) records for Pacific Sailfish including most in a day on conventional (124) and on the fly (57)...as well as most in a season.....

Thanks for taking the time to visit – and to read this guide!

## Travelling to, from and in Guatemala

### Arrival at La Aurora

The airport in Guatemala City (La Aurora) is, as you would expect in Latin America – hustling and bustling in both the arrivals and the departures area.

In July 2007, seven new gates were opened. These gates were equipped with Jetway bridges and modern conveniences. A new parking garage was also built and it can handle up to 500 vehicles.



There are brand new ticket counters. 2007 brought significant gate expansion (11 new gates were available starting December 2007). The airport now has two concourses. The northern concourse has 12 traditional gates and 3 remote gates. The central concourse, used for larger aircraft, provides 4-6 gates depending on the size of the aircraft.

The airport's runway currently measures 3,000 meters. There have been efforts in the past to expand the runway but this has not yet been possible since there's a commercial area to the north of the runway and a small ravine near the southern side of the runway.

With construction at the airport almost finished, but still some tweaking going on - arrival facilities and routes can change, so keep eyes open for signs and directions to baggage claim and exits.

Prior to the baggage hall, you will be faced with immigration. You should have received an entry document on your flight – and it is at this point that it will be examined. Lines here can be slow and quite long. Make sure before you depart that you have a minimum of 6 months validity on your passport; the rule is 90 days, but they can be awkward – and we have had guys sent home on the next flight for less than 90 days left – so better safe than sorry. No visa is required.

TIP: the left hand lane is for Guatemalan Nationals, but once all have been cleared, it opens up to all – so the lefthandmost line is usually the quickest to clear, as it has 2 booths available to it.

Once you have your bags and belongings (double and triple check!!) – follow signs for the exit. Before leaving the baggage hall, you will see the customs officers standing in the exitway collecting the customs forms. I have never seen them do anything except collect forms – but be aware of the rules and regulations for bringing items into the country.

The exit path meanders around the new construction – past rental car counters etc. – until you emerge into the arrivals area, where you will likely see masses of waiting family to the right, and the exit door straight ahead. This is the point to slow down, and get visual id and eye *contact* with the representative from the Great Sailfishing Company. You will see a sign held high with your parties name on it – and you will be directed from there.

The van or taxi will pick you and your belongings up outside the exit door.

If -for any reason- you do not see the GSF representative or the sign, proceed slowly outside. Wait as close as possible to the exit door, do not accept any offer for transport or taxi from anybody unless they are a bona fide representative of the [Great Sailfishing Company](#); they will have your details in hand.

To the left is a bank of telephones – you can get a prepaid card from the café/booth in the departure area to use at these phones if you do not have currency. You will have received emergency contact numbers for us in Guatemala, please do not be shy to use them if for any reason we have a disconnect – we would rather know as soon as possible so that we can rectify and reassure you.

## **On Departure**

It is traditional for the family, and in many cases the extended family to travel to the airport with whomever is departing – and so despite the fact that the airline schedule itself is relatively small for an International airport, you can multiply the numbers of seats by 5 or 10 to get an image of the departure and arrival areas.

Security is such that only bona fide travelers are allowed to actually enter the facility – so be prepared to show tickets and passport as soon as you alight from the van or taxi. There is inevitably a crush around the departure entrance, as family members either endeavor to get into the facility, or are just enjoying an argument – so keep documents close to you and in a firm and secure grip, as you should anywhere faced with a concentration of people.

Once inside the airport proper, it is relatively serene and well organized. You are faced with the usual array of departure counters, segregated lines etc.. There is substantial paperwork yet to be undertaken however – a departure form and a customs form, so have a pen in hand and be prepared to complete as you await check-in.

One tip here is if staying at or close to the Guatemala City Marriott, American Airlines have a check in office there (open until 6pm) – and all of this paperwork can be taken care of in advance.

Once you have checked in, you will be directed to a booth on the checkin floor (currently close to the entrance), where you will have to show your ticket and boarding pass in order to get the \$3 airport tax (payable in USD or Q). This will then be affixed to your boarding pass for checking later.

From that point on, it is a normal international departure process.

## Self-driving

**We highly recommend not to self-drive in Guatemala.** The Great Sailfishing Company has its own drivers and transport that is comfortable and air conditioned.

Like anywhere else in the world, the airport is a natural concentration for foreigners, who typically have valuables or luggage or passports close to hand – and as such can become targets. The area surrounding the airport therefore has a higher concentration of incidents than most other areas as anybody with mal intent tends to “fish where the fish are”. If you must drive, before departing the airport, be clear about your route, hide from view any valuables – and do not stop. When stopped at traffic signals keep sufficient space between you and the vehicle in front that is anything goes awry, you are not hemmed in and can get away.

Such incidents do not happen very often – particularly given the growth in tourism – but they do happen, as in almost all countries where there is a large discontinuity between those that have plenty, and those that have very little.

*TIP : If you do self-drive, it is worth considering hiring (we can arrange this) a driver to navigate you back to the airport, or on arrival in Guatemala City, find a Taxi and ask them to lead you to the airport. It is not terribly difficult to find, but close to it are one-way systems that combined with crazy traffic can take you way out of your way and lost before you know it. You truly do*

*NOT want to end up “on the wrong side of town”, driving a rental car down a side street at night.*

Once on the road, the highway out of the city can be slow and very busy with convoys of trucks. Although they do try to manage this with curfews during the daytime, a consequence can be that all of the large trucks time their trips to be on the outskirts of the city during the day and early evening – and so can concentrate in waiting areas and clog up arteries. Outside of the city, you will be greeted by a modern 4 lane highway, where cruising speeds of 60-70mph are the norm – and it is a relatively direct and quick transition to the coast for fishing.

There is a toll about 2/3rds of the way to the coast of about Q20 – so you WILL need Quetzales on arrival if you choose to drive

### **Other means of transport**

Exiting the airport building itself, you will be faced with a typical International airport vision of anxious faces waving cards with names, hotels or rental car companies on them.

Another option for transport is to take a shared van to a major town or destination.

By far the most popular – and so the most numerous vans – is to the ancient city of Antigua. If you are staying in Antigua before you travel to the coast, this is a viable and economical way to do it. The cost is between \$5-20 depending on how well you negotiate (I would target \$10 so everyone feels good !), and the vans will accommodate up to 13 passengers. They will take you directly to your accommodation, or at least very close to it.

The drive to Antigua is just over an hour through the mountains and up into the volcanoes (not literally!)

## Money and Tipping

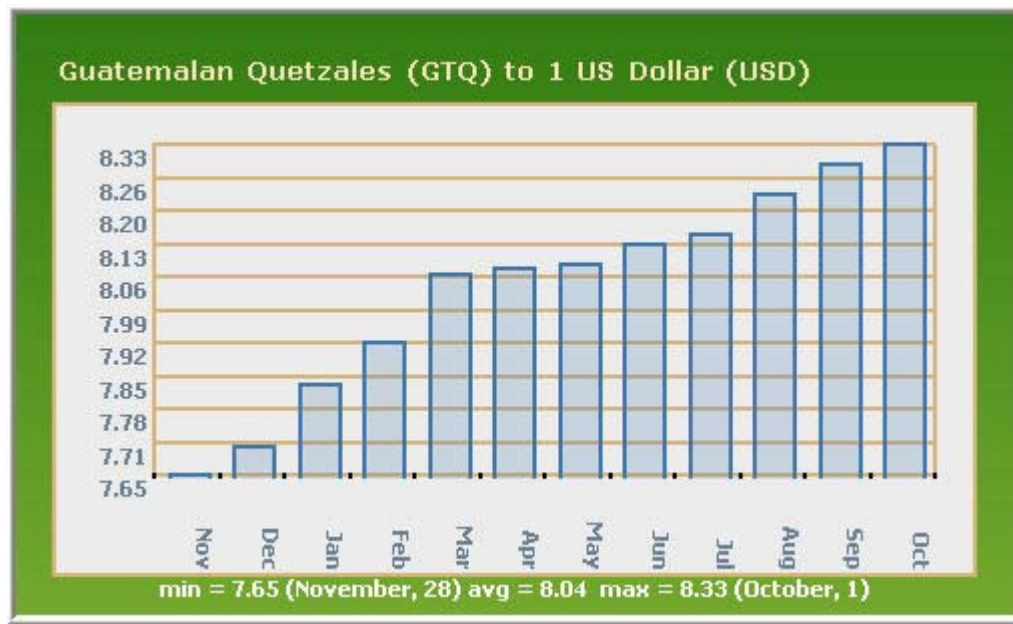
### Currency

The currency in Guatemala is the Quetzal – colloquially referred to as “Q”. It is named after the national bird of Guatemala, the Resplendent Quetzal and is divided into 100 cents (centavos in legal Spanish or lenes in Guatemalan slang). The plural can be either *quetzales* (as it is in Spanish) or *quetzals* (in a slightly anglicized form). In ancient Mayan culture, the quetzal bird's tail feathers were used as currency. Having currency named after the bird carries a strong historical value indicative of the native people of Guatemala.

In general, we don't recommend or find it necessary for anglers to convert or carry a large amount of local currency. Most places that you would find yourself in are more than happy to accept US dollars or major credit cards. As mentioned above, Quetzales are necessary if you are driving to the coast for the toll station midway – but apart from that only small amounts are convenient for tipping and minor shopping.

The International exchange rate floats as a major currency – as of mid 2009 the rate is approximately Q8.25 to the (US) dollar – although you will find that “actual” rate can fluctuate quite dramatically depending on where (and when) you exchange. The rate has been relatively constant against the US dollar for several years, but between 2008 and 2009 it has lost some significant ground :

	Q0.50	Brown
	Q1	Green
	Q5	Violet
	Q10	Red
	Q20	Blue
	Q50	Orange
	Q100	Light brown



It is normal – and profitable – if buying small items (t-shirts in the market for example) to pay in dollars – but receive the change in Quetzales.....you can imagine who makes out on that deal!

## Exchanging Currency

There are basically four ways to acquire Quetzales – and as you move through the options, you basically trade rate for convenience .....

1. Buy them before you get to Guatemala! We would recommend about \$50 of what the Brits call “walking around money”. This should be sufficient for minor purchases, tips and the all important Q20 departure tax (although this can be paid in \$ at the airport if you don’t have any currency left)
2. The major banks will exchange at competitive rates – but **BE AWARE** that Guatemala practice is to pay employees with checks that need cashing at the bank. The consequence of this is enormous lines and waiting periods – it is quite normal to see a line stretch out of the bank and down the block of people waiting their turn (and that means you!) – So be prepared for at least an hour wait.

3. At the Hotel, resort or operator – you should anticipate a premium of about 10% for this, although it can be more.....
4. As mentioned above; buy some goods (supermarket, market for example) – pay in USD – receive Quetzales as change (Cambio). You can try to haggle the rate, but don't waste too much time! It helps if you can speak some Spanish.....

## Tipping when fishing

Tipping in Guatemala is not widely practiced – although it has become the norm in certain services, particularly – as you would expect – in any provided directly to tourists and foreigners.

We are frequently asked “What is considered normal tipping practice when fishing”, to which we generally advise that a tip of \$125-175 per boat per day is probably average. The wide range should be primarily determined by factors such as

- #1 is how hard did the crew work for you? Were they watching the baits **ALL** the time? Were they changing out the baits on a regular basis to avoid them becoming “washed out”? Were they considerate and asking how **YOU** would like to fish rather than how they normally fish?
- How many anglers on the boat (in fact how many passengers total) – the tip referenced above assumes 4, so if more or less there is a case for adjustment
- Were you provided with snacks, food and drink as and when you want it? Were your needs anticipated?
- Did the captain work hard to find fish? Was he successful? While the tip should not necessarily reflect the number of fish caught, there IS a correlation between
  - Number of fish caught and effort/work provided
  - Number of fish raised to efforts to scout a productive area and find what baits are working



In all cases of course, the tip is discretionary, and should reflect the level of service provided and your satisfaction with the crew. The suggestions above are given for guidance and for your consideration only. Be aware also that there can be a significant difference in expectations for tip between “local” crews (which are reflected above) – and “Professional” or “International” Captains.

The prime season in Guatemala is relatively short compared to many other destinations, and so there is a “school of thought” that says that Captains and crews have a need to compress earnings into a shorter time – and so the average needs to be higher. Again, we leave the reader to wrestle with that one alone.

## Tiping for other services

A general “rule of thumb” that is realistic, is that if you are receiving service from someone who primarily deals with tourists/anglers – then a small tip (or one that reflects the effort and time) is reasonable.



Of course hardly anyone is going to refuse a tip, but some examples of what is customary maybe:

- Maid in a villa : \$5/day total for the group unless there is a lot of laundry or extra cleaning to be done
- Chef/Waitress in a private villa: \$25/day for the group between them. The chef is usually the “leader” –so a tip left for him/her would be shared amongst the rest of the team
- Drivers – only expect to tip if they help substantially with luggage (\$1/bag), or if they go out of their way to help (run an errand for example)
- Tour guides – maybe 10% of the total cost, or approximately \$2/hour spent with them – of course this can vary significantly based on number in the group, quality of narrative etc

Do NOT expect to tip for “professional” services (doctor, bank, modern stores).

Salaries in Guatemala are low compared to US or European standards, to give you an idea (and perhaps to help gauge the “value” of a tip :

- Unskilled day labor – you may see people picking fruit or cutting grass with a machete in the central reservation for example : \$8-10 per day
- Moderate skilled office or shop worker : \$350/month
- Skilled but not professional (may speak English for example) : \$500/month
- “Professional” (accountant, bank sub-manager, store manager) : \$1000/month

Of course, just like anywhere, there are a small percentage of folks (mainly in the city) that earn a substantial amount of money, but for the most part, compensation is relatively low – and so a tip (or “propina”) can be very meaningful.

## About Fishing in Guatemala

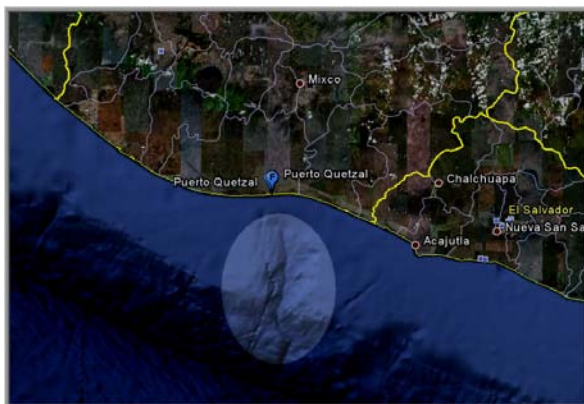
### Billfish Capital of the World

Guatemala is recognised as the home of the most prolific fishery for Sailfish in the world. Our boats regularly have over 50 shots per day in peak season, and you can anticipate 15-25 shots on a “regular” day. Nothing is ever guaranteed in fishing – but this is about as close as you can get if you dream about casting to lit-up Sailfish within 20ft of the stern, multiple hook-ups and constant action.

The coastline and ecosystem support vast quantities of bait year round and warm eddies hold large pods of sailfish between 2 and 50 miles from port. Guatemala holds many official (and unofficial !) records for Pacific Sailfish including most in a day on the fly (57), most on conventional in a day and most in a season.....so there is clearly no shortage of action !

There is also good action for Dorado and Tuna if you want to bring something home for the table in the evening. You may also have the opportunity to hook up to Blue Marlin in considerable numbers during the season. Inshore you may find Roosterfish, Wahoo, Cubera Snapper/Pargo and Amberjacks to bust your arm!

Prime season runs from October until June – although the fish are resident all year round, and releases of 40 or more fish have been recorded in every month – but this is the dry season, when the wind is calm and the air is warm, so preferred for its comfortable fishing conditions.



Fishing occurs anywhere from 2-50 miles out from the breakwater, although it is more usual to find the fish in what is termed the “pocket” – a deepwater canyon that is 25 miles wide and with drop-offs from 1000 ft to 5000 ft. It is here that strong currents from east to west turn back from the coast of El Salvador, and form a giant natural occurring eddy system that holds vast quantities of bait and attracts pelagic fish in huge numbers.

All billfishing is catch and release using exclusively circle hooks – another reason why the fishing remains so consistent and the fish so prolific.

## Weather and Seasons

Guatemala is often called the land of the eternal spring – in fact it is the unofficial National Slogan, although for a while it became the formal footnote for the country – as from 1935 and continuing for the next forty years, it was used as the text in four languages for the cancelling of all stamps and postage coming in and leaving the country. This familiarity persists today, although it can be misleading.

While in Guatemala you can experience comfortable spring breezes, hot and humid tropical weather and very cold nights (below 0°C), all in the same day, depending on where in Guatemala you are. The average annual temperature in the highlands above 3,000 meters (9840 ft) is 15°C (59°F), while in the lowlands the average is 25°C (77°F). In the lowlands and towards the Pacific Coast that preoccupies most fishermen, the temperature can reach 38°C (89°F) or higher and the months with the highest temperatures are from May to July.

The term itself “Land of Eternal Spring” was first used to give the image of a country and countryside that was in perpetual bloom. The highlands and mid lying ground is ideal for cultivating plants that are nourished by the volcanic ground – and so can be found in bloom almost all year round. Flower cultivation and export (primarily roses) continues to be a major industry in Guatemala today – in fact one of the largest rose farms in the world can be found just outside the ancient capital of Antigua.

The name however is a bit of a misnomer as In Guatemala there are two seasons, as common in the climate of the northern tropics: the dry season and the rainy season. The longer season is the rainy season, which lasts from May through October (often with a pleasant intermission in August) followed by the dry season which lasts from January through April.

## The Calm Seas of the Pacific Coast of Guatemala

Guatemala boasts some of the world’s most consistently flat seas – often as far out as 50 miles it can be calm and almost like a lake. Observing the geography of the coastline, you can see how the waters form a large protected bowl with Mexico at the top and Panama at the bottom. This combined with the protection offered from the prevailing winds by the highlands and the ridge of volcanoes means that the coast and coastal waters are almost wind free on a year round basis, with late February through May almost guaranteeing flat seas.

The picture here was taken 40 miles out to sea – to give you an idea of how calm it can really be !!



During the dry season – and the height of the sailfishing season of November – May, it is highly unusual to see any problems with weather impacting the sportfishing fleet’s ability to leave the dock. Even during the wet season, the weather offshore can vary significantly to the coastal weather – but there is certainly a greater propensity for weather delays or to be “blown out” in the summer months.

Remember however that just when the wind is providing some cooling effects while fishing – this is no time to relax the regimen of high factor sun protection.....this is a must when fishing offshore all year round in Guatemala, along with high quality sunglasses and a wide brimmed hat for screening your head.

## Fishing Calendar for Guatemala

Although the main attraction for anglers in Guatemala is the huge numbers of aggressive Pacific Sailfish that are present all year round – there are also good opportunities for many other species of gamefish in the calm blue waters off the coast.

Inshore waters offer the prospect of the much sought after Roosterfish. Although the immediate coastline does not provide ideal conditions for fishing for these gamefish, they can be found usually trolling around areas of strong current within a few miles of the Pez Vela marina. Typically Roosterfish are pursued with either livebait or soft imitations cast around hard structure or rock formations. As we don’t have any significant outcroppings or high reef for bait to concentrate close to shore, we resort to trolling either ballyhoo or rapala lures and aim to cover more ground.



This results in lower reported catch rates than other locales – but the Roosters are around, and can be caught – it does offer a less expensive option for a charter day or “rest day” (or half day), with a chance of bagging another trophy. Like most other members of the Jack family, it is not considered to be a good eating fish.

Another exciting and productive way to fish the inshore waters of Guatemala is to “chase the shrimp boats”. Typically there are four or five shrimpers working within a few miles of the harbor, and the local captains will be happy to contact them to find out when they are lifting their nets – as when they do this, the nets are always followed by large schools of competitive and aggressive fish – predominantly amberjacks.

If you are looking for nonstop fishing action either on conventional or the fly – that will leave you with a very sore arm at the end of the day – then this is a great and very economical alternative for a full of half day fishing.

Inshore fishing for either roosterfish or jacks is often done from pangas or small open fishermen/centre console boats that are less capable of making the run offshore in search of the larger pelagic fish.

While the peak season for offshore and bluewater fishing in Guatemala is February and March, this is mainly because these are the months when cabin fever reaches its apex in North America and Canada – and so when most groups feel most driven to escape the cold and come down to the (sub)tropics for a respite from the bitter cold.

The main sailfish season runs from November until about May, as this is when the consistently calm seas and moderate currents allow huge schools of baitfish to congregate and concentrate in the “pocket” offshore between six and twenty-five miles.

The “shoulders” of this season – so November/December and again in March/April tend to be when we see the best and most consistent marlin bite (predominantly Blue marlin, but also catching blacks at times). Of course there is variation around these generalities – in fact the marlin bite does seem to be improving each year for the last several years – for the most recent season 2008/9, there was hardly a day went by when the fleet did not catch at least one good sized marlin, and typical days most boats would raise at least one marlin.

GUATEMALA SPORTFISHING CALENDAR - PACIFIC												
SPECIES	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
SAILFISH	E	E	E	E	G	G	G	G	G	E	E	E
MARLIN	F	G	E	E	F	F	F	G	G	E	E	G
DORADO	G	G	G	G	G	E	E	E	E	G	G	G
YELLOWFIN TUNA	G	G	E	E	E	E	F	E	E	E	G	G
WAHOO	G	E	E	E	E	E	F	F	F	F	G	G
KING MACKEREL	G	G	E	E	E	E	G	G	G	E	E	E
CERO MACKEREL	E	E	E	G	G	F	F	F	F	E	E	E
ROOSTERFISH	G	G	G	F	F	E	E	E	F	F	F	G

E = EXCELLENT    G = GOOD    F = FAIR

Often what has raised the most excitement on slow days has been finding debris and getting out the superlight tackle to target dolphin/Mahi for sport and the table. These fish are harvested commercially in the region, but they make excellent sportfish as well. They are among the fastest growing animals in the world – reaching sexual maturity in as little as 3 months (although 4-5 is normal.....must be a bar joke in there somewhere?), and essentially consume everything and anything that they come across.

They put on body mass at an extraordinary rate, reaching the 6lb mark in less than a year and more than tripling in size over the course of the next 12 months. They make great light tackle sport fish, as they will have hatched underneath floating debris or weed, and can be teased out to turn a bite into a feeding frenzy – holding the school close to the back of the boat to facilitate superlight tackle or fly is the way to go.



When you are wondering where they all came from – consider that having reached sexual maturity (at 4-5 months), they typically spawn every 6 weeks and release up to half a million eggs that start to hatch after a couple of days.....and start to feed voraciously !

The corollary of this means that even with the commercial fishing in the area, we are not shy about trying to catch Dorado on the way out to the fishing grounds to make cerviche for a late morning snack – and to have some good fillets left for a great meal in the evening.

Yellowfin tuna are also quite abundant in the coastal waters within sixty miles during these “shoulder” periods of November/December and April/May. They are usually found – or at least located – under a school of spinner dolphin. The dolphin (*Stenella longirostris* or long-nose dolphin) are quite abundant in the region, although their numbers have been declining because of the effects of longlining and netting for tuna.



The dolphin cluster in large pods ranging from a few hundred to a few thousand. It is not clearly understood why they choose to perform such acrobatics, and it is not always the case that there are tuna beneath them – but it is always a spectacle to watch while trolling along in the deep blue water – with the prospect of 20-50lb tuna hitting the lures at any time!



The tuna are also pelagic, roaming the open seas in search of clean water and food – and although not always accompanied by dolphin, this is the easiest and most reliable way to visually target a potentially productive piece of water.

## Fishing for Sailfish

### Conventional

Our typical trolling setup for sailfish in Guatemala consists of running four or five lines. On most sportfishing boats, two of the line would be run from outriggers as hookless teasers, the others are often flat lines and may or may not contain hooks depending on the method employed.

All billfishing in Guatemala is catch and release, and in order to try and minimise mortality wherever possible, we only use circle hooks with conventional tackle.

The corollary of this is that the angler needs to employ a “dropback” in order to allow the hook to set, and so needs to be in control of the bait when (or as soon after as possible) it is taken by the fish.

Circle hooks essentially work by allowing the whole bait to be taken into the gullet or as far as the stomach, and then pressure is applied to withdraw the bait and so the hook. When the hook encounters a change in the pressure vector (such as when the line and hook are exiting the mouth), the point of the hook is designed specifically to catch at this point. As it catches, pressure alone will cause the hook to turn by virtue of the shape and gap of the hook and the angle of pressure – driving the point and eventually the barb into the bony part of the mouth or ideally into the “scissors” of the jaw.



The hook-up rate when properly employed is at least as high as with “J” hooks (75% or better), but the mortality is dramatically higher – with survivability in excess of 99%. Another significant benefit of utilising the circle hook is that once engaged correctly (or “buttoned”), there are far fewer occurrences of fish “jumping off” or losing the fish during the fight.

The challenges faced by the conventional angler therefore are to learn two particular skills:

- Timing the dropback to the fish
- Developing sufficient and the “right” amount of pressure to achieve a secure hook-up.

The first skill is certainly the one that causes the most adrenalin to pump, as it happens generally in full view of the excited fish.

The billfish are first attracted to the boat – or more accurately to the combination of sound from the engines, the wash from the prop and the bubble trail caused by teasers and the hull itself. This is why you may have heard discussion in the past about “this boat raises a lot of fish” – as certainly the shape of the hull/keel and the resonance of the engine frequency stimulate the aggressive impulses with predatory fish.

It is the general commotion of all of the above that first attracts the sailfish – perhaps they connect it in some way to the commotion that occurs when baitfish balls form and in particular when they are under attack.....but once “raised” to the spread, the natural predatory instincts then start to take over –

and they look for a target. This is the job of the teasers. They are designed to sit slightly outside and offset to the commotion, and to generate their own bubble trail to first get the fish' attention – but then the colors, shape and demeanour single it out as a potentially injured baitfish.....and a prime target.

The sailfish then becomes focussed on its target, and after perhaps a couple of closer inspections will charge and attack! Its first attack is to swipe the target with its bill. In the “natural” world, this is to stun the bait or to handicap it so as to make the catch more predictable. Typically one swipe with the long bill of a sailfish or a blue marlin is more than enough to stun or kill the target so that it floats helplessly down for an easy meal.

In the “simulated” world of bluewater fishing, the initial strike to the bait causes the line to be released from the clip, momentarily causing slack in the line and so a hesitation or “flutter” of the bait in the water. This is often enough for the sailfish to come charging and take the bait.

If this occurs, then it is time to be patient, as now we have wait for the fish to run and swallow at least past the gullet. Don't forget all of this is happening while the reel is screaming (sailfish are renowned as the fastest fish in the ocean, reaching speeds of up to 60mph).....but patience is a virtue. Most captains advocate a dropback of at least 5 seconds (and often say 7 so that they are more assured of 5 good ones!) – at which time pressure can be applied.

More often than not however, the fish will become focussed on the teaser (that IS its job after all!), which of course has no hooks in it, and so requires a different approach. This becomes what is commonly referred to as “bait and switch”.

The angler releases the drag and clicker – and reels the bait coincident with the teaser that has captured the fish' attention. While this has been happening, the mate (or the captain if the teaser is run from the flybridge) has been continuing to lure the fish in, chase the teaser and the drop it back again – so that the fish is becoming more and more frustrated and more and more aggressive. This is when the sailfish in particular (but most billfish) becomes “lit up”; adrenalin and amino acids in the surface layers of the skin are released, and cause colouration that is almost neon-like in its brightness. That is when you know the fish is really ready to bite!



At this point, and as the teaser is being pulled towards the transom by the mate or captain – hotly pursued by the lit-up billfish – the angler prepares to place the bait in front of the fish. At the last moment, the teaser is literally jerked or lifted from the water – and the fish is left with one bait only now to attack.....the switch has been completed. Once the bait is taken, it is time for the patience as described above!

A refinement on the above “bait and switch” method is to use only hookless teasers (two or more may be natural, weighted ballyhoo for example), that all work together to attract the billfish to the transom.

Sitting in the gunnels though is two ready rigged “pitch baits” that are standing by to be released at the appropriate time (usually designated by the Captain) back into the wash and in line of sight of the sailfish. The other teasers are withdrawn, and the sailfish becomes focussed on the new pitch bait. There is some substantial choreography that goes on during this process between the Captain, the mates and the anglers to ensure that things happen in the proper sequence and at the right times in order to retain the sailfish’ interest. Any slight mistake in any of these elements can easily cause the sailfish to just “fade away”.

Sometimes this can even add to the adventure however – as if/when the fish fades from view, the mates’ job is to entice it back into the spread and hence make it “targetable” again by the angler. They typically do this by casting back teaser baits on medium heavy spinning tackle, and essentially “spin” the teasers back to the wash – hopefully grabbing the errant sailfish’ attention in the process. This is akin to the process widely used for flyfishing – and commonly referred to as “reteasing” – more than an art than a science, but skilfully applied by experienced mates.

The second element which is essential to understand and eventually to practice is how to produce and sustain the “right” type of pressure in order for the circle hooks to do their job effectively.

“Classic” trolling techniques for offshore predatory fish have mostly used “J’ hooks. The fish would take the bait in the spread, and the taughtness of the spread combine with the narrow gap and sharpness of the J hook would hook-up to the fish. Many anglers would enforce this by manually “setting the hook” as well – when the contact of the lure/hook with the fish is confirmed – and series of hard tugs is made in order to drive the hook home in anticipation of a stronger hook set.

When using circle hooks, this combination of techniques is almost guaranteed to lose the fish every time. The shape and angle of the hook point are specifically engineered to pass smoothly over even surfaces, and only to catch when a change in angle and pressure is detected. Any attempt to “tug set” a hook, will almost always result in the whole hook being pulled from the mouth of the fish. The trick or technique is to quickly generate a firm and consistent pressure – and to maintain it until the hook has turned properly and the barb is set – ideally in the scissors of the jaw.

The first milestone in this process, once the fish has been teased and taken the bait, is to allow sufficient time for the sailfish to swallow the bait completely. Often billfish – particularly when there is an abundance of bait – become a little half-hearted about finishing their meal, and just drag or “mouth” the bait by instinct. Any attempt to set a hook or apply pressure when this is the case – early in the process – will also result in a pulled hook. Hence the need for patience, and the official count of seven (although five good ones will do!). As soon as the fish has attacked and taken the bait, the least amount of pressure applied is best – so free spool the reel, just applying enough pressure to it with the thumb or nail to stop it overrunning. The goal at this point is to not allow the fish to detect any pressure being applied if possible.

After the count, engage the gear in the reel, sweep the rod gently to the side (not striking up) and reel as quickly as possible to address any slack that may have entered the line possibly by the angle that the sailfish took when running. As soon as contact is felt, continue to reel so that constant pressure is

applied – but now you can start to let the rod do some of the work applying pressure as well. This is normally where the hook has been drive home, the billfish feels it – and explodes from the water. Anglers will often be shocked at this point to discover that the sailfish has run about 300 yds further than t they had anticipated ! They are looking for the fish jumping 50-100 yds behind the boat – when all of a sudden it appears 300 yds to starboard!! The cardinal rule throughout this whole process is to keep any motions slow and deliberate – constant pressure is the key!

## Fly-fishing

Because of its abundance of billfish, and sailfish in particular, fishing in Guatemala has become the destination of choice for fly-fishing for sailfish for both novices and experienced. The ratio of hook-up to raises when fly-fishing for sailfish is significantly lower than when fishing for them and other billfish on conventional tackle – and so more raises is a particularly attractive feature to those who want to try to catch their first sailfish on the fly.

Guatemala is blessed with calm waters in the fishing season, and strong currents from Mexico bring with them an abundance of sailfish that feed on them aggressively. An average days fishing for sailfish in Guatemala would see up to twenty billfish raised to the stern of the boat, making it an ideal destination for novice fly-fishermen who are keen to learn the technique of casting a fly to a “lit up” sailfish and experiencing the thrill of fighting a hundred pound plus fish on the long wand.

When fly-fishing for sailfish in Guatemala, the novice fly-fisherman can expect some short instruction dockside before the boats leaves the dock – explaining the procedure in some detail of how to time the cast and importantly the signals and direction he can expect to hear from the Captain on the bridge. Fly-fishing for billfish is a team enterprise, and this instruction is one of the most important elements of success when out on the water.

Unlike trolling with conventional tackle, when fly-fishing for sailfish it is normal to only have one side of the boat actually trolling teasers or naked baits in order to raise the sailfish. If the angler is right handed, that crew will raise the portside outrigger and clear the deck and gunnel to make it easier to cast to the fish. The teasers and baits are pulled from the starboard side of the boat and when a billfish is raised the crew quickly jumps into action.

The crews objective at this point is not to catch the fish, rather it is continue the tease of the fish in order to elevate its level of excitement and make it as aggressive as possible. They will take a spinning outfit loaded with a hookless ballyhoo in most cases and pitch the bait in front of the sailfish and try to entice it to chase. As the sailfish charges the bait, the crew will wind hard in order to keep the bait just outside of the fishes attack range.

When the Captain believes that the fish is sufficiently “lit up: and ready to strike, he will issue a command to the crew to whip the bait from the water. In synchronization now, he will put the boat into neutral and give the command to the angler to cast.

The ideal cast at this point is just to the right (from the angler’s perspective” and behind the sailfish. The theory of this is that the sailfish will have been charging a bait drawn towards the starboard side of the boat by the crew – and as the bait has now disappeared from its view, will start to fade away. If things



have gone according to plan up until now – the angler will have made his cast, started a pop on the fly – and the fish will automatically come onto this in its line of sight.

This is probably one of the most thrilling sights a fly-fisherman can experience – as the big sailfish recognizes the fly as bait and lunges for it.....and the fly-fisherman (hopefully) has his billfish hooked onto the flyrod! We have also moved away from “J” type hooks for our fly-fishing rigs, essentially for the same reasons – now preferring to use beak hooks.

The “upturned beak” hooks have a little something in common with circle hooks that is worth mentioning here. Aside from the positive hooking mortality benefits that have made circle hooks so popular, they were also designed to pretty much work on their own in finding a soft spot to sink into, thus making hook setting not only unnecessary, but, counterproductive. Using either style of hooks should always come with some very basic though counter-intuitive instructions (but it usually doesn’t).

The hooks with the “upturned beaks” share the same flaws/advantages (glass half full or glass half empty) as their circle hook relatives. This is where some changes in hook setting technique are required. Setting the hook, especially aggressively, with this style hook will almost surely make the hook slide and miss initially, and oftentimes into a place where it’s being firmly *held* by the strong grip of the sailfish and not imbedded in the fleshy parts. It actually feels like you’ve stuck the fish well in most instances. However, a gradual tightening of the line with steady pressure almost always lets the hook find its mark. It’s the same with “J” style hooks, however, the advantage in sharpness out of the box goes to today’s upturned beak style hooks, and, they almost never straighten out based on the physics of their more rounded design. The same unfortunately cannot be said for “J” style hooks, most of which are inferior in wire strength as well. Another thing to consider is that these hooks (upturned) have a shorter overall shank length. Most mates bury the hook eye too far into the tube for this hook design, in essence shortening the distance between the clumsy popper head and the point of the hook thus interfering with hook point to flesh contact. That’s not a good thing, and, further to that, the hook point then tends to ride a little bit more *upwards*, effectively creating an even shorter gap length furthering the potential for “slipping” and missing upon using the more traditional hook setting methods.

We have observed many charters where this technique has taken a little while to sink in – and a good deal of practice (and self control!) to become productive. Fishing with one of the most famous and productive Sailfish skippers once, he said, and I quote, “Listen, the less you do, the better you’ll be, just come tight and stay there”. I listened, but after going 3 for 3 on my first sails ever I thought “I must be good enough to do better, I’m a veteran now. I’ll employ what I knew *before* I came here.” Odd logic huh? So, I started setting the hook tarpon style . . . tighten up, rod in the opposite direction of the take, 3 strong tugs, sweep the rod . . . all the usual stuff. Guess what? Oh-fer 6. I didn’t recover from that until I harkened back to his very first words of advice. The less you do the better, just come tight and

stay there. I'm a stubborn son of a gun, so I just force myself to mentally go through that scenario every time it's my turn on the transom . . . and it works!

Also, something else learned the hard way about a sailfish and how it eats a fly - advice from another famous billfishing captain: never, ever keep a fly *in front* of a sailfish, this is the fastest way to lose the attention of the fish and all of the effort teasing and reteasing will have been for nought. If you do succeed in hooking up – the prognosis is still not good, and believe me, can be extremely frustrating!

When the cast is misplaced into the oncoming path of the fish, always take it away and recast the fly rather than go through the inevitable frustration of another unbuttoned sailfish . . . sometimes 5



seconds into the fight, sometime 30 minutes into it, but almost always, the fish that eats that fly straight on comes undone or is bill-hooked. This advice mind you, came after many years fly fishing for sails. If you think back to how many of your straight-on shots came undone, and the honest answer was likely, most of them.

When the fly is eaten head on or quartering to, the best approach is to lift it up and throw it beyond the fish. All you have to remember is to keep your line from landing on top of them or being too close to them when they turn on the fly. It's amazing that a 7 foot long fish can freak out so badly when it touches a fly line. It's a hoot of a technique too, as most of the fish hammer the fly so hard going straight away that letting line slip through your stripping hand and gradually tightening is the only way to prevent break offs on the hook set. It's downright violent most of the time, but more importantly it's deadly effective.

## Fishing the Moon

Much has been written, and even more has been discussed about the effect of moon phases on fishing and in particular billfishing. While most theories converge upon the idea that as the moon gets brighter – and therefore particularly around the full moon – the predatory fish are more able to hunt effectively at night time. When they hunt, usually they catch and eat – so anglers end up the next day pursuing billfish that have been feeding well and so not that aggressive for another meal.

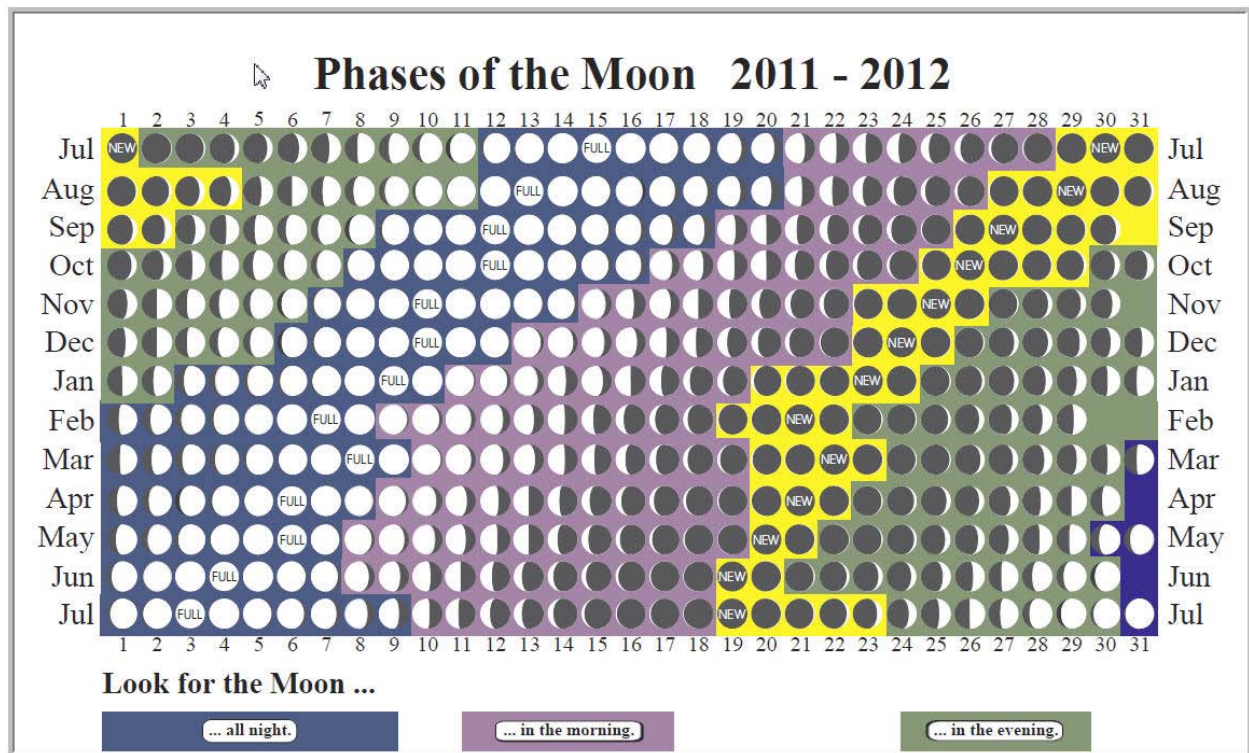
While this is a rational argument, and does make some sense – and no doubt moon phase is a variable in the catch rates – there is also evidence that it is not a very strong factor for raising high numbers of sailfish at least in Guatemala. In the last two years when records were set (124 on conventional, 27 on the fly by single boats in a single day), the periods happened to coincide with (or very close to) a full moon. There was a study done that collated statistics over a decade in Australia – and which showed some correlation. The remarkable finding however was that there was correlation for the new moon (yellowfin, Mahi) - but also for the full moon (Black Marlin) !!

So much for that theory!

Why such different results?

According to this study's authors, currents effect the fishing significantly, and as we all know, the biggest tides occur everywhere during the full and new moons.....and different species react in different ways to the changing of the drive of the currents and the effects on the concentration or otherwise of baitfish. So a summary from our experience is that certainly the new moon is the most popular period for anglers to visit Guatemala for sailfishing, and there is some rational to the argument – but it is likely (and local opinion) that other factors such as weather front/stability, strength of current, location of blue water etc are probably more influential variables and in the fleets' experience have a greater effect on the number of sailfish raised on any particular day.

For reference however – below is a chart of moon phases for 2009 & 2010 (EST.)



## Fishing for Marlin

The best season is considered to be in the months of November and April, but just like any species and fishery, yearly fluctuations do occur. Many major tournaments targeting Blue Marlin take place in October and November

Long established as the premier destination for Sailfish, Guatemala is fast building a reputation also for Blue Marlin as well as Black Marlin and (rarely or less frequently) striped marlin.

The productive and bait-rich waters and currents off the Pacific Coast of Guatemala, coming down from Mexico and pushing towards Panama already hold records for numbers of billfish – including most in a day on conventional (124) and on the fly (57)....as well as most in a season. The same factors that attract such numbers of Sailfish also contribute to the catch rates of Blue Marlin interspersed with Black Marlin at times.

The fishery is primarily known for the prolific numbers of sailfish and remains largely undeveloped for Marlin, as the fleet has always focused attention and tactics that target Sailfish – but even with the smaller baits and slower trolling speeds we have seen a consistent trend of improving raises for Blues that average 350-400lbs.

The season overlaps with the sailfish season, with most marlin raises occurring during the months of December and April - but because the fleet have not regularly targeted the Marlin, it is largely unknown as to the full potential – but we do have experience over past seasons of most boats raising at least one fish per day when the runs have been on.

Our sense is that if we direct our efforts towards Marlin tactics, these statistics can only improve, and we anticipate the fishery becoming a significant Bluewater destination for all pelagics over the coming seasons.

It is therefore a pioneering investment that is required – but the opportunity exists to be among the first to “discover” a new Marlin fishery, with the worst case outcome being to switch tactics and catch Sailfish either on conventional or fly until your arms fall off !

We have the boats, crews, equipment and gear – we just need some anglers with a pioneering spirit and a sense of adventure to accompany us. We will work with you to adjust our tactics to yours to make it a thrilling adventure for all of us !

### **Pacific Blue Marlin**

Pacific Blue Marlin make their homes all across the Pacific, including the warm blue waters of Guatemala. The best season is considered to be in the months of November and April, but just like any species and fishery, yearly fluctuations do occur. Many major tournaments targeting Blue Marlin take place in October and November when most anglers feel the highest populations exist.

The Pacific Blue Marlin is considered by many to be sportfishing's ultimate prize. Growing as large as 2000 pounds (the largest caught on rod and reel was 1,805 pounds in Hawaii in 1970), and often seen in Mexican waters from 300-600 pounds in season, the fish is as acrobatic as it is powerful. Alive, the Pacific Blue tends to make colossal runs - like times trial on a liquid dragstrip - and perform aerial shows

that give even non-anglers the opportunity to witness their majestic beauty. The Blue Marlin is truly a treat to catch.

Anglers like to troll artificial plugs, but when conditions dictate, live and dead baiting techniques are used extensively. Drop-backs are often employed, using Ballyhoo or similar fish as baits. When using live bait such as a skipjack tuna (7-15 pounds is a good size), the bait will exhibit certain behaviors while attached to the line. It will become nervous when a larger fish is near and a strike is impending, and this is where the angler's and the boat driver's skills must work in unison. Although many claim the right approach is to count to 10 or more after the initial strike, Marlin open their mouths wide and engulf the entire bait with a vacuum-like force, and the hook is often safely set about 3 to 5 seconds after the taking of the bait. Any longer and the fish tends to have swallowed the bait making for a less enjoyable fight and a higher chance of mortality caused by gut-hooking.

Though many biological characteristics distinguish the Blue Marlin from the Black, the easiest way to tell is from the pectoral fins. On a Blue Marlin, the pecs are hinged and will retract close into the body, whereas a Black Marlin's pectorals are fixed.

The current IGFA record for Pacific Blue Marlin is 1,376 pounds, and this fish was caught in Hawaii in 1982.

### **Black Marlin**

To four and a half metres. This is a heavy, thick set marlin of warm Indo-Pacific oceans which reaches our northern coasts in summer months wandering in the waters off Guatemala. The short, thick spear, low dorsal lobe and fixed pectoral fin are features which immediately distinguish this species from the more abundant striped marlin. Colour is blue-black above, greyish-white below, and an overall bronze flush is sometimes present. Stripes are often present but may fade quickly after capture. Any other fishes are taken as food. Black marlin are most regularly encountered around shallow reef structures. Captures of this species have dwindled in recent years, largely because of the swing towards lure fishing. Specialists targeting black marlin with large live-baits continue to have success

## **Inshore Fishing**

Although the main attraction for anglers in Guatemala is the huge numbers of aggressive Pacific Sailfish that are present all year round – there are also good opportunities for many other species of gamefish in the calm blue waters off the coast.

Inshore waters offer the prospect of the much sought after Roosterfish. Although the immediate coastline does not provide ideal conditions for fishing for these gamefish, they can be found usually trolling around areas of strong current within a few miles of the Pez Vela marina. Typically Roosterfish are pursued with either livebait or soft imitations cast around hard structure or rock formations. As we

don't have any significant outcroppings or high reef for bait to concentrate close to shore, we resort to trolling either ballyhoo or rapala lures and aim to cover more ground.



This results in lower reported catch rates than other locales – but the Roosters are around, and can be caught – it does offer a less expensive option for a charter day or “rest day” (or half day), with a chance of bagging another trophy. Like most other members of the Jack family, it is not considered to be a good eating fish.

Another exciting and productive way to fish the inshore waters of Guatemala is to “chase the shrimp boats”. Typically there are four or five shrimpers working within a few miles of the harbor, and the local captains will be happy to contact them to find out when they are lifting their nets – as when they do this, the nets are always followed by large schools of competitive and aggressive fish – predominantly amberjacks.

If you are looking for nonstop fishing action either on conventional or the fly – that will leave you with a very sore arm at the end of the day – then this is a great and very economical alternative for a full of half day fishing.

Inshore fishing for either roosterfish or jacks is often done from pangas or small open fishermen/centre console boats that are less capable of making the run offshore in search of the larger pelagic fish.

## Other Worthwhile Excursions in Guatemala

If you are considering taking a lay day (or possible not everyone in your party wants to fish like a demon from dawn to dusk, there are several worthwhile sightseeing trips to consider while on your fishing trip in Guatemala. Some are definitely easier than others!

The first stop – almost by definition, whether you choose to take advantage of it or not – is Guatemala City. Being the present day Capital City of Guatemala, it is naturally home to many of the nation's libraries and museums, including the National Archives, the National Library, and the Museum of Archeology and Ethnology, which has an extensive collection of Maya artifacts.

These centres, combined with some spectacular monuments, historic buildings and churches can easily fill a day of sightseeing. If you are considering this, we **STRONGLY URGE** you to enquire in advance about a professional tour either through us or the hotel. Roaming around the City with a guidebook is **NOT** recommended !

There are also private museums, such as the Ixchel, which focuses on textiles, and the Popol Vuh, which focuses on Maya archaeology. Both museums are housed inside the Universidad Francisco Marroquín campus.

## Antigua

If you are only thinking about taking a single day between fishing in Guatemala, our best recommendation is for you to take an easy day trip to the old capital of Guatemala – Antigua.



It is about an hour away from the Marina Pez Vela on good roads. Our company van will take your group of up to eight persons directly from your villa, resort or lodge to the town square of Antigua. From here you are free to wander the old cobblestone roads and ways of the town – populated by internet cafes, travel agencies, bars and cafes.

*La Antigua Guatemala* means the "Old Guatemala" and was the third capital of Guatemala. Established in 1543 by the Spanish Conquistadors, it was originally named Santiago de los Caballeros (Knights of St James) from the original Capital of Ciudad de Santiago de los Caballeros de Goathemalan. It served as the centre of governance for the "Spanish Colony of Guatemala" for almost 200 years -which at the time consisted of almost all of present day Central America as well as the southern part of Mexico.

A series of earthquakes that started in 1717, but culminated in a set of large earthquakes in 1773 caused the Spanish Crown to mandate the move of the capital to a safer location (present day Guatemala City) in 1776.

The badly damaged city of Santiago de los Caballeros was ordered abandoned, although not everyone left, and was referred to as *la Antigua* Guatemala, or *Old* Guatemala. The population had peaked in the 1770's at around 60,000 – but today's residents number about half that.

La Antigua is noted for its very elaborate religious celebrations during Lent (Cuaresma), leading up to Holy Week (*Semana Santa*) and Easter (Pascua). Each Sunday in Lent, one on the local churches and parishes sponsor a series of processions through the streets of Antigua. This is by far the most popular week of the year to visit Antigua, and travelers can expect an extreme shortage of good accommodation – as well as restrictions in the town for parking and access – given the crowds.



Antigua is also well known for its Spanish Schools (over 100 at last count), and for its "cosmopolitan" ambience – with restaurants and bars that serve the tourist population, and are rarely seen in other towns and villages outside the Capital.

There is a reasonably large market in the town, which on Thursdays and Sundays is expanded with more fresh food, clothing and local "delicacies". Next to the market is a purpose built "craft market" which is obviously targeted to tourists, but the quality is good and there is a good showing of handiworks, better t-shirts etc (although you will pay substantially more). Expect to haggle no matter which market you end up in! If time is short, and you need decent things to take home – we would recommend the craft market as a "quick fix" that won't break the bank.

The trip can include a bilingual guide on request, who will accompany you on a walking tour of the old town, as well as planned visits to coffee plantations and jade factories – even help you negotiate a deal!

- Approximate cost of this trip is \$150 per group.

## Tikal and Flores

Flores is a town in Petén, Guatemala. The town proper is an island on Lago Petén Itzá, connected to land by a causeway, on the other side of which lie the twin towns Santa Elena and San Benito.

Although it is a pleasant and safe place to visit, it is probably best known for two reasons:

- It was here, on the island of Flores on the shore of Lake Petén Itzá that the last independent Maya state held out against the Spanish conquerors. The Spanish did not manage to conquer the island until 1697, when they marched in, attacked via boats, and destroyed it. Those who could flee did so, and many Itzá people hid in the jungle for years. From the ruins of Noh Petén arose the modern city of Flores
- Flores is served by the Santa Elena International Airport but commonly known as Mundo Maya International Airport – and is the airport that visitors use as the gateway to Tikal.



Tikal was a Maya city of great power and size, the largest of Maya cities during the "Classic Era" over 1000 years ago. Many beautiful buildings have been uncovered and many more wait to be discovered. Amongst the many Maya sites in Central America, Tikal is perhaps the most breathtaking because of the



scattered impressive buildings which have been restored in an area with many more ruined buildings still enveloped by the jungle. The sight of the temples poking through the canopy is quite awesome. You can climb to the top of a few of the temples and get panoramic views

from above the tree tops. This is one of the available experiences when staying in one of the hotels actually at the park entrance – enter the park pre-dawn and watch the sunrise over the jungle canopy accompanied by the hoots and hollers of monkeys and jungle wildlife. If you are very lucky, you may catch a glimpse of a native Jaguar.

Tikal dates back as far as 400 BC, and grew into one of the largest and most powerful of the Mayan cities during the Classic Period (AD 200-900). It often clashed with other cities in the region, and was eventually defeated by Caracol in 562 AD. King Ah Cacau returned Tikal to its former glory about a

century later, and it remained somewhat prosperous until the general decline of Mayan civilization set in around AD 900. Tikal was eventually abandoned completely, consumed by the jungle, and pretty much fell off the map until proper archeological excavations started in the 1960's.

- The magnificent Mayan ruins and World Heritage site of Tikal is located in the Northwest of the country, and is really only achievable as a trip by flying from GUA. There are several flights per day. The park itself opens at 6:00am, and officially closes at 6:00pm. Visitors staying overnight have a choice of a modern 5\* hotel in Flores or a smaller (but safe and clean) hotel actually at the gates of the park. It should be noted that it is a several mile ride from the gates of the park to the site itself over a road with a 10km/hr speed limit that is strictly enforced – so it may take as much as 20 minutes from arriving at the park entrance to actually disembarking your transport.
- We usually recommend two ways of doing this :
  - As a daytrip (albeit a very busy daytrip), it is possible to take an early flight (departing Guatemala City approximately 7am), returning in the afternoon (approximately 4.30pm). We advise doing this at the end of the fishing trip, so that on return from Tikal, you can stay in the hotel (Marriott, InterContinental) in Guatemala City for departure home the next morning.
  - Alternatively – and a little more relaxing – is to stay overnight in either Flores or close to the park itself at Tikal. This is therefore a 2 day trip with an overnight. We have a choice of hotels from 5\* (in Flores) to 3\* at the park itself (a little more “rustic” but forgoes the drive early in the morning.
- In both of the above options, we will organize on your behalf connections/transport, private tour of the park with an English speaking guide and accommodation(s) as required. Breakfast is available on arrival, and lunch is provided in the park.

## Other Excursion Options

- Other popular trips are :

## Lake Atitlan

- Lake Atitlan – is a beautiful volcanic lake surrounded by high hills and dormant volcanoes. The lake is surrounded by a series of small villages named after the saints, each having their own personality and offering opportunities to shop, browse and absorb the colourful culture. The lake is renowned as the deepest lake in Central America, and although it has yet to be fully sounded, it is known to be at least 1000 ft deep at its deepest point. The region encompasses the lake and the towns around them. Panajachel is best known, and a good entry point, but more off the beaten track are San Pedro la Laguna or the "less party, more meditation" village of San Marcos. Due to the region's popularity, other towns along the lake, such as Santa Cruz la Laguna and San Juan are now starting to see growing tourism. Many *lanchas*, or small boats, provide transport from village to village around and across the lake. Some boats are scheduled like buses; others will go as soon as they accumulate enough passengers, like share-ride taxis. There is plenty of accommodation available – although it is strongly advisable to organize it before you arrive – ranging from fairly basic posadas to very good “almost” 5 star hotels on the shores of the lake.



Lake Atitlan is a trip from the coast that realistically needs at least two days. The drive itself is approximately four hours from the coast (about 2-3 from Antigua), but can take longer based on traffic and road conditions. An overnight at least is highly recommended so that you can tour some of the major towns on the shores of the lake – and take the time to relax and enjoy a pleasant meal overlooking a remarkable view. We would be happy to organize or make recommendations for you.

If you can take a little longer, and time it correctly – a good route to take is coast – Atitlan (Panajachel) – Chichi (below) – Antigua, stopping off along the route. This is fairly easy to organize as each of these legs are well established minibus routes, so timing can be flexible.

## Chichcastenango

- The market at Chichi(castenango) – can be done as a (long) day trip, or more easily as an adjunct to a trip to Atitlan. The market (Thursday and Sunday) is one of the largest in the region and offers all of the usual shopping/bartering opportunities as well as local fare. Chichicastenango is well known for its famous market days where vendors sell



handicrafts, food, flowers, pottery, wooden boxes, condiments, medicinal plants, candles, pom and copal (traditional incense), cal (lime stones for preparing tortillas),

grindstones, pigs and chickens, machetes, and other tools. In the central part of the market plaza are comedores (small eateries). Among the items sold are textiles, particularly the women's blouses. The manufacture of masks, used by dancers in traditional dances, such as the Dance of the Conquest, have also made this city well-known for woodcarving.

## Hiking the Volcanoes

- There are an incredible 33 volcanoes in Guatemala - in fact it becomes one of the lasting impressions of the landscape as you come to Guatemala whether for fishing or travelling.

Five of these are classed as active, with three within easy travel distance of the coast where you will be staying when fishing in Guatemala.

Probably the best known and most visited of these is Pacaya which is a popular day trip for visitors to

Antigua. The volcano first erupted approximately 23,000 years ago and has managed it at least 23 times since. It rises to a height of 2,552 metres and after being dormant for a century erupted violently in 1965 and has been going pretty much continuously ever since. The last significant activity was in 2006 when a new lava cavern opened and started to stream down building a significant lava field as it went.



The lava stream remains open, and you can get within feet of the molten lava if you are brave enough! It is a relatively inexpensive day excursion to make either on a layday from fishing or if some of the fishing group prefer to opt out of fishing for the day and take a side trip.

### **BE WARNED HOWEVER**

It is a volcano - that means it is steep and you need to hike to reach the point at which you can approach the lava stream. It is approximately 4km from the bottom to the top - and it is ALL UPHILL!!!

The last Km or so is a difficult traverse over the recently formed lava field - and so is also dangerous as you are surrounded by sharp expired lava. As you approach the lava stream itself, you notice the rock temperature increasing and with it the air temperature.....until you finally reach your destination.

We suggest doing the afternoon tour - as you hike back at dusk and the view of the volcano rising majestically above you while rumbling and spewing out lava is quite breathtaking.

If you choose to experience this on your fishing trip, we HIGHLY recommend : Closed toe hiking boots Long trousers or at least long socks Plenty of water Flashlight or headlight

It is possible to ascend (and descend) the first 3km of the trek on horseback (about \$30) - but the last Km up and down you have to hike.

It is a trip that is very worthwhile if you have the energy to spare !

## Golf

When you are thinking of golf destinations, Guatemala may not be the first that comes to mind.

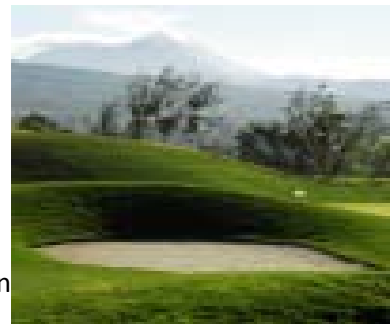
For a population of about 14 million living in a country roughly the size of Tennessee, golf remains largely an elitist sport, but that is starting to change. The country is home to five courses and to date has comfortably accommodated the country's two thousand or so active players.

The most recent addition to this stable of International courses is La Reunion located just 11 miles outside the old capital and world heritage site of Antigua.

The course is based within the 1380—acres of a former coffee plantation and in the shadows of four towering volcanoes—Agua, Fuego, Acatenango, and Pacaya. It has been appropriately named “Fuego Maya” or Mayan Fire – and was designed by renowned course architect Pete Dye. The course is relatively long, although even an average golfer should be able to complete the round in under 4 hours.

Although lacking the links (excuse pun) to the Royal & Ancient, there are indigenous links to the ancient Mayan calendar, which consists of 20 months of 18 days each. The final 5 days of the lunar calendar are then consumed by “Wayeb” which is held as a sacred time for relaxation and contemplation for the coming journey or the following calendar – much as the golfers’ consider their return to the challenges of the course or their next tee time.

Despite its only now emerging golfing population, Guatemala is starting to display its talents on the International golf scene – the country recently qualifying for the first time ever in an International event with the success of two budding stars Pablo Acuña and Alejandro Villavicencio who will represent the



country at the Omega Mission Hills World Cup to be held in China November 27-30 which has a prize of \$5.5 million.

If you want to try your hand on this remarkable course perhaps as an “off” day from fishing in Guatemala, [The GreatSailfishing Company](#) is pleased to arrange tee times for you – and even has a selection of golf sets for you to choose from (it can be difficult to rent clubs in Guatemala), just ask and we will be happy to accommodate you !

The courses are laid out to perfection and meet worldwide standards. Narrow fairways lined with pine trees, water obstacles around every bend and rolling volcanic terrain all add to the excitement, difficulty and adventure of playing golf in Guatemala.

We can organize day outing for you. Inquire for pricing and availability

### **The Clubs**

We offer to you the possibility of playing on three of the most beautiful Private golf course of Guatemala City. We have purchased six complete sets of golf clubs for our clients enjoyment because being private clubs, some do NOT rent clubs.

### **NEW !!! La Reunion Golf Resort in Antigua**



The course is based within the 1380—acres of a former coffee plantation and in the shadows of four towering volcanoes—Agua, Fuego, Acatenango, and Pacaya. It has been appropriately named “Fuego Maya” or Mayan Fire – and was designed by renowned course architect Pete Dye. The course is relatively long, although even an average golfer should be able to complete the round in under 4hrs. LaReunionLareunion2

LaReunion is only 11 miles outside the old capital and world heritage site of Antigua, and can be enjoyed as a day trip when fishing at the coast.

### **LaHacienda**



It offers the largest installation to play and socialized: 18 holes Golf course, par 72 and a -total of 7.102 yards, 9 tennis courses. 2 squash courses, a pool, bar and restaurants.

## Maya Golf Course



The only Golf Course that has a hotel service, the 18 holes golf course of 7092 yards from the professional tee box offers also pool, restaurant and bar.

## San Isidro Golf Club



Is perhaps the most modern of the courses, it measures 6640 yards, is the highest course at approximately 4,800 feet above sea level, has the most dramatic elevation changes, and features beautiful natural views of the mountainous area.

## Accommodations and Hospitality

### Guatemala City

Most anglers' experience when visiting Guatemala City is fleeting. It is usual for anglers to stay overnight in one of the top class hotels on the night prior to departure – but for most, that is the extent of their contact with the city.

Guatemala City has a somewhat deserved reputation as a dangerous city if you are to stray into areas (or zones as they are termed in Guatemala) that are outside of the main tourist areas. The city is large, sprawling and now has close to 3 million inhabitants. There are officially 25 zones contained within the city (of the zones however only exists on paper, and another is a small piece of land in Mixco, so don't spend much time looking for them within the city limits!) – zona 10 is the **Zona Viva** (lively zone) – and as the name implies is home to many of the better bars, discotheques and restaurants. It is also known as the "Hotel Zone" – as this is also the home for most of the International brand hotels such as Intercontinental, Hyatt etc.

While not pedestrianised, it is pedestrian friendly – and most restaurants and bars are within easy walking distance of your hotel. More importantly, the zone (or about 3 square blocks) is well patrolled by tourist police, and as long as common sense is used, incidents are few and far between in this zone.

The major hotels that we use (Intercontinental and Barcelo/Marriott) both have quick, convenient and regular (and free!) shuttles to and from the airport. Transit times outside of peak hours are only about 15 minutes.

## Antigua

There are accommodations in La Antigua Guatemala to suit every budget and need, from in-home bed&breakfast (usually part of a full immersion Spanish study program, to the beautiful five star Casa Santo Domingo.

It is the latter that we usually try and use for anglers visiting Guatemala, as for a reasonable price, it is an experience not to be missed.

The hotel is conveniently located in Antigua, far enough away from the noise and bustle of the city, but



within easy walking distance of the town square and main shopping district – it makes an ideal base to unwind and explore the architectural gems and history of the old capital. It is located in the grounds of the Santo Domingo Monastery, which was once a stronghold of one of the most grand convents in the Americas. The hotel is notable in that it preserves the architecture from the baroque period of ancestral America and contains a number of treasures from

this period on display. Each of the 128 rooms is well appointed and range from comfortable doubles to the Presidential Suite. It is by far the best hotel in the region – many say it is the best hotel in Central America – and is frequently used by Heads of State (including US presidents) and government ministers for retreats and meetings. On site are all of the amenities that you would expect from this class of accommodation, from fine dining options to full concierge services. The grounds are well kept, full of blossoming bougainvillea and lilac jacaranda; the interior is restored and preserved baroque stone architecture, complete with its own museum of ancient artifacts from the monastery and region. We highly recommend it.

## While Fishing (Puerto San Jose)

There are several options for accommodation and hospitality when fishing at the coast, each has its own merits.

- The first and probably ideal choice if you have a group that is between four and eight, comprised of friends or relatives that only manage to get together sporadically. The private villa offers



comfort, security and “care free” accommodation – leaving you free to enjoy the facilities and to concentrate on the important things of friends, family and fishing. The villas usually are located in the grounds of the Soleil Resort, and therefore offer scope for relaxing in a number of different environments from beach to pool. The area is large and secure – so that facilities such as tennis and jogging can

be pursued without any concerns. Most villas are large and well equipped – usually they are staffed by a personal chef, waitress and maid to ensure that your trip is as hassle free and productive as possible.

- If you are looking for the more impersonal atmosphere of a large resort, yet enjoy the freedom to roam across expansive grounds and facilities, then the beach resort is perhaps a good alternative for you. The Soleil Resort is



probably the best known and most accommodating to the expectations of anglers. The rooms are clean, air conditioned and comfortable. The meals and drinks are included in the cost, so no worrying about the bar tab at the end of the evening (or even worse, getting stuck with someone else’s bar tab!) – Just focus on enjoying yourselves, and making sure you can get up in the morning for the fishing!! The resort is predominantly a timeshare targeted towards the Guatemala “elite” who mostly use it as a weekend getaway from the city. Because of this, you can anticipate relative solitude during the week (you may be one of very few tables for dinner, or the only ones swimming in the pool) – but the pace picks up at the weekend, with a show and disco that can keep you rocking until the wee hours.

- Finally you may be predisposed towards a fishing lodge – filled with like minded sportsmen and women. The obvious benefits are that the atmosphere is very much fishing orientated – the downside is that you get to hear everyone else’s fishing stories (and horror stories) every night during and after dinner. These options are not usually “all-inclusive”, so there can also be the fright of a significant tab at the end of the stay. The most recent lodges are very comfortable and well equipped, and can certainly be a good option, particularly for individuals and couples.



## Safety on Land and Water

### Land

As mention in the introduction - we highly recommend not to self-drive in Guatemala. The Great Sailfishing Company has its own transport and drivers- the vans are comfortable, have capacity and are air conditioned.

Like anywhere else in the world, the airport is a natural concentration for foreigners, who typically have valuables or luggage or passports close to hand – and as such can become targets. The area surrounding the airport therefore has a higher concentration of incidents than most other areas as anybody with mal intent tends to “fish where the fish are”. If you must drive, before departing the airport, be clear about your route, hide from view any valuables – and do not stop. When stopped at traffic signals keep sufficient space between you and the vehicle in front that is anything goes awry, you are not hemmed in and can get away.



Such incidents do not happen very often – particularly given the growth in tourism – but they do happen, as in almost all countries where there is a large discontinuity between those that have plenty, and those that have very little.

Once on the road, the highway out of the city can be slow and very busy with convoys of trucks. Although they do try to manage this with curfews during the daytime, a consequence can be that all of the large trucks time their trips to be on the outskirts of the city during the day and early evening – and so can concentrate in waiting areas and clog up arteries. Outside of the city, you will be greeted a modern 4 lane highway, where cruising speeds of 60-70mph are the norm – and it is a relatively direct and quick transition to the coasts for fishing.

You will be accompanied during your trip by a representative of the Great Sailfishing Company throughout your stay anytime you are outside the Soleil Pacifico resort and compound area. This is for your safety and to ensure no wandering into areas that are not safe for visitors. We will be happy to take you to the market for souvenirs etc.. The only time that we propose self-guiding is in the heart of the town of Antigua. This is a very popular tourist destination, and as such is well policed and safe. It is safe in the evenings around the main square area, but we would suggest limiting ambling to within a block or so of that without our guide.

Overall, Guatemala is no better and no worse than any other country in the region; if you conduct yourself with awareness of your surroundings, do not wander off the beaten track – and apply copious

amounts of common sense, there is little or no reason to be concerned. Your safety and security is paramount. We have been operating here now for 8 years without any significant incident (touch wood) – as we believe have the other operators.

When in the accommodation, whether in a private villa or staying at the resort Soleil Pacifico, you are able to walk around freely within the area and to go to the beach with impunity.

## Water

All of the vessels owned and operated by The Greatsailfishing Company come complete with all necessary safety equipment.

Standard on our boats are (sufficient) US coastguard approved life jackets, self-inflating emergency rafts, flares, whistles, backup electronics (vhf, gps) and ePirb.

The fleet in Guatemala is relatively small, and many of the captains are either related or have known each other for their whole lives. Information on fishing is freely shared so that everyone is able to locate and catch billfish. All billfishing in Guatemala is catch and release, so there is no competition to find them first or harvest them before others get there!

A significant benefit of this arrangement tends to be that during the day, the fleet fish within 10 miles of each other, and are in constant radio contact – so if any emergency or event occurs, other boats can and will be on scene in a short amount of time. Guatemala is also blessed with very calm seas – even 50 miles out – for most of the prime fishing season, which takes away one of the significant variables for offshore fishing.

The captain will generally give a safety briefing on your first visit to the boat. If you are unclear about the location of the safety equipment, or any part of the process, please ask us either at the dock prior to departure or at any other time during your trip.

The marina Pez Vela is conveniently located within the much larger Puerto Quetzal, which has all of the security features that you would expect of a major international port.

## The GreatSailfishing Company

### About Us



The Great Sailfishing Company has been providing economical all inclusive conventional fishing and fly-fishing vacation packages in Guatemala for eight seasons. Our private villas in the large and secure Villas del Pacifico Resort offer the opportunity to spend time with your friends or family undisturbed. Each villa offers a private or semi-private pool and is staffed with a personal chef, maid and waitress so that you can enjoy total flexibility and even have your catch prepared as you like

it, when you like it.

The villa is fully stocked with soft drinks, wine, beer and spirits as well as snacks and other conveniences. Each group receives a cell phone with sufficient credit to call home or to have as a contact number.

When you are considering a trip to Guatemala, Jim and Kevin are available to answer your questions either by email or telephone. Our office is based in North Carolina, and you can expect a prompt and honest response to all enquiries.

When in Guatemala, you will meet the other two partners in the company – Les and Carlos. They are based in our office in Antigua, but will meet you each day to offer advice or to resolve any issues that you may have. At all times, you can expect prompt and courteous service – and you will be dealing directly with the owners of the company who have full and immediate authority to resolve an issue to your complete satisfaction.

We own and operate our own Bertram Sportfishers from 35 – 38ft and employ full time crews who are experienced and knowledgeable of the area to be fished.



## Sharing a Trip

We get many enquiries each season from individuals or small groups who would be willing to combine with others in a package or charter in order to share costs and make the experience more affordable.

We are well aware that the cost for a single angler (and often for two anglers) can often be prohibitive - so we have a program to try and facilitate the sharing of a trip with others to try and make it as cost efficient as possible.

If you are interested in participating, please fill out the registration below and we will periodically send out an email to all registered anglers proposing dates and how many slots are available - as well as an estimated cost (it may vary slightly depending on arrivals/departures).

If you do decide to combine with others, this is what we guarantee:

- **Accommodation will be either in a 3/4 bedroom private villa or at the Soleil Resort. Each angler will have his/her own bedroom**
- **In most cases each angler will have his/her own bathroom**
- **All trips include all meals and all drinks - so no sharing of bar tabs or unexpected bills at the end. You pay up front and there are no other charges (tips are discretionary)**
- **Final night will be at the Marriott/Barcelo in Guatemala City on a room only basis.**

We target 4 anglers per group/boat, but may be up to 6 per boat - but we will tell you at the time of booking. Our target cost per single angler is approximately \$2750 for a 4 night, 3 day fishing package - all inclusive of transfers, accommodation, meals and drinks (including alcoholic drinks)

## [6 Reasons to fish in Guatemala with The GreatSailfishing Company](#)

- Our [Guatemala fishing business](#) has just completed its 8th successful season – releasing a huge number of sailfish and blue marlin. When you book with us, your deposit and payment are held in the US by our US based LLC – so your \$ are secure in case of any issues. We are [always available](#) by email and phone.
- Your [safety is our #1 concern](#) – on land and on sea. We have a routine for your fishing trip that is safe from arrival in Guatemala to fishing for sailfish until your return from fishing in Guatemala.
- We provide [Personal Attention](#). Two of the partners are permanently in Guatemala and will meet you every day before fishing. Issues do occur – but they have full authority to resolve them on the spot. You are [dealing with the owners of Great Sailfishing in Guatemala](#).
- Our fishing equipment and crews are first rate. We use primarily Penn and Okuma tackle, and our boats carry fly fishing gear if you want to try [fly-fishing for sailfish on your Guatemala fishing trip](#).
- Staying in our Villas for your fishing trip means that you have freedom, space and privacy for your group. Always one group only per villa – so your fishing trip is how **YOU** want it, not others.
- Value for money – when we say all-inclusive, we mean it. **No hidden extras**, no surprise bar tabs on departure, no extra hotel bill. The only thing you need cash for on your fishing trip is discretionary expenses!

## Frequently Asked Questions

**How safe is Guatemala?** A lot of people ask this question and our reply is safe. Like any destination, you have to be conscious that you are a tourist, be aware of your surroundings and use reasonable judgment at all times. As long as you are part of an organized tour and heed advice, you should not encounter any problems. Over the last 10 years we have not heard of any incidents involving anglers.

**How has hurricane Stan effected your operations?** We had a few of our private houses that had to be repainted but are now in excellent condition. All infrastructure at the coast is now operating normally.

**Where is Puerto San Jose, Guatemala?** Puerto San Jose is on the Southwest Pacific side of Guatemala. After landing at the Guatemala City International Airport it is around a 90 minute drive to the coast on one of Central America's newest 4 lane highways.

**Where is the Villas del Pacifico Resort?** After reaching Puerto San Jose the resort is about 10 minutes further North. It is a large, gated resort that aspires to be the "Guatemalan Club Med."

**Why is fishing so good?** There is a natural circulating current alongside Guatemala's Pacific Coast between Mexico and El Salvador that creates a natural eddy that is rich in bait. Blue water can be found from 2-50 miles offshore all year.

**What is the high season?** Fishing is good year round but the high season is November thru May - primarily because this is when the weather is most temperate, seas are calm – and many folks like to leave the colder climates to enjoy some sunshine!

**Why is Guatemala more expensive than Mexico or Costa Rica?** Most of our packages are all inclusive (except for airfare). That means you arrive at the airport in Guatemala City, you are picked up by us or our driver who will take you to the Villas Del Pacifico ~ staying here means your food and drinks (local) are included. We will pick you up every morning and take you to the marina, and you will be met at the end of the fishing day and escorted back to the resort. At the end of your trip we will take you to Guatemala City/La Antigua for your last night or the airport. Baja and Costa Rica tend to fish a narrow range clos(er) inshore – whereas the Guatemala fleet pursues the large schools of pelagics frequently up to 50 miles offshore – so the difference in fuel consumption is significant.

**What is not included?** Airfare, tips to the crew and house staff, optional excursions, some fly-fishing tackle/flyes/leaders/tippetts and any item of a personal nature.

**What type of fish is there?** The majority of people come for Pacific Sailfish. We do have dolphin (Dorado), yellow-fin tuna, blue/black/striped marlin and Wahoo. There is also inshore fishing for rooster-fish, jack, sierra, Spanish mackerel, and cubera snapper.

**How far is Guatemala?** Guatemala is a 2.5 hour flight from Houston, 3 hour flight from Atlanta & Dallas, 2 hour flight from Miami, and a 4.5 hour flight from LA.

**Weather?** Guatemala's pacific coast is hot with the rainy season starting in late May and goes thru October. The dry season starts in late October and goes through mid-May.

**What do I need to bring?** Bring your passport, shorts, sun block, sunglasses, deck shoes, insect repellent and a camera.

**Do I need to bring my own fly-fishing gear?** No, the Great Sailfishing Company has a large collection of quality fly-fishing rigs from 8wt through 14wt – as well as a complete line of Cam Siegler tube flies and Rainey's flies

**Do you carry light spinning rigs?** Yes, The Great Sailfishing Company offers light spinning rigs with Penn 460, 4600L, 4500ss and 6500ss reels.

**What conventional fishing tackle is on your Bertrams?** The Bertrams are outfitted with 6ea Shimano TLD reels on 6ft. stand-up Penn rods and a marlin rig (Penn International 50 TW on a matching 6ft. stand-up rod). We also have lots of teasers and lures for inshore fishing.

## Corporate Groups

There are many good reasons why companies desire to get their executives away from the hustle and bustle of day-to-day business-and a company-sponsored fishing trip to Guatemala can provide the perfect environment to satisfy all needs.

Whether for incentive purposes, corporate retreats, executive sessions or just a need to congregate executives far away from the office so that they can engage their creative minds in solving real-world issues-it is always important that details are taken care of on their behalf so that they can focus and use the time together productively.

A Guatemala fishing trip can be the perfect locale for groups as small as four and as many as forty executives. Spending time together with a collective focus can dramatically deepen relationships and enable conversations that may otherwise be difficult to broach. Fishing together in small groups of up to six anglers for a day provides relaxation interspersed with moments of high excitement that promote teambuilding and support for one another.



The Greatsailfishing Company has been operating with its own fleet of sportfishing boats in Guatemala for almost 10 years and is able to provide all necessary planning, support and facilities for both small and large corporate groups. Smaller groups are accommodated in one or more of our private villas that are fully catered and supported by an experienced staff. Larger groups that may require business facilities such as videoconferencing, projectors, computer networking etc. may be accommodated in the adjacent full-service Soleil resort.

Working closely with the client, we are able to develop great teambuilding events such as intra-group fishing tournaments, flyfishing clinics, tackle and tactics and interactive sessions that combine to provide a memorable but productive event.

Corporate adventure travel to Guatemala may serve several different purposes. Probably the most common is for it to be used as an innovative way to recognize and reward top performers in the organization as incentive travel or as a special bonus. It is also often used as a way for senior executives to renew and reinvigorate their relationships together in a way that is relaxed but still retains a competitive edge.

The benefits of corporate fishing trips do not stop when the group departs Guatemala; the memories created and the relationships that are rekindled continue to serve the organization over many months and in some cases years. The buzz of the fishing trip is not confined to those who participated; it may continue to provide an incentive for tomorrow's top performers to deliver so that they too may become a member of the elite team.

If you are considering a corporate fishing trip to Guatemala there are some important questions to be asked and answered:

- Will the organizer of the trip be on-site so that any issues that arise can be handled promptly and effectively
- Are the facilities proven and safe
- Can changes to itineraries and attendees be accommodated on-site as needs arise
- Is the providing company well established and able to provide quality references
- Can the locale provide the desired mix of privacy, adventure and environment

The owners of The Greatsailfishing Company are based in Guatemala and pride themselves in answering “yes” to all of the questions above and will serve as your direct support and liaison. Because they are owners, they are empowered to make decisions and commitments on the spot in order to address requests or issues as they arise. No having to “refer back the main office” or get “approval from management” – we can take care of your group with the highest quality and responsiveness. We own our own fleet of Bertram Sportfishers and have full control over all facilities. When you are planning a fishing trip for incentive travel or executive retreat, fishing in Guatemala is an ideal adventure for you and your team.

You will have personal, immediate “concierge” service from the moment you start to plan your trip to the time you depart Guatemala – from the owners of the company who are empowered to make decisions on the spot and to resolve any issues immediately.

