

FISHING IN CAYMAN

Written by Frank Thompson. Photos by Captain Jimmy Nelson of Extreme Fishing Adventures.

The Cayman Islands are a well known vacation destination offering beautiful beaches, clear water and great diving. The islands are easily accessible with regular flights from Miami, Tampa, Atlanta, New York and other cities. Flight time from Miami to Grand Cayman is only 1 hour and 5 minutes. Accommodations range from private villas to luxury condos and five star hotels. There are lots of activities for the entire family to enjoy during a Cayman vacation, both above and below the crystal clear water. In this article we will focus on the great sport fishing that the Cayman Islands have to offer.



Starting inshore, battles with Bonefish can be enjoyed year round on all 3 islands. Anglers can cast a fly or shrimp to the Bones on the flats in Little Cayman or drift through the Bonefish muds in the North Sound and engage in a memorable tug of war with these majestic fish. Tarpon in the 30 to 100 pound range can also be caught year round from the docks and beaches as well as in the canals.

Poppers and other lures can be used to entice a bite from the "Silver King", however bait is more commonly used on island, with the preference being gills and guts from a freshly cleaned Snapper or other table fare.



Moving offshore, anglers can test their skills with Tuna, Wahoo, Dolphin or Marlin. Blackfin Tuna and Skipjack are great fun to catch on light tackle, especially for novice or budding anglers. Crews regularly troll small feathers on 20-30 pound reels for



Blackfin and Skipjack, then use them as live bait for Yellowfin Tuna or Marlin, as well as, strip baits for trolling. Yellowfin are generally targeted off the West End of Cayman Brac, East End of Grand Cayman and on the Cayman Bank (12 miles west of Grand Cayman). Chunking is the preferred method to catch Yellowfin in Cayman. Captains start their drifts up current of the bank in a depth of around 1800 feet and will drift into 200 feet before retrieving their lines and starting another drift. During each drift crews chum with Barracuda, Blackfin, Skipjack or Sprats. Hooks can be baited with cut bait, however live Flying Fish, Goggle-eye or Blackfin seem to attract the larger Yellowfin. In recent weeks, Yellowfin caught on the Cayman Bank have averaged 80 pounds with the occasional 100+ pounder being boated off the East End of Grand Cayman.

Wahoo can be caught throughout the year, but are more abundant during October through March with the full moon in February traditionally yielding the bigger fish. Most boats troll



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rigged Ballyhoo or Blackfin strips behind a skirt at 7-9 knots on 50-80 pound reels. Trolling with monel wire is also a popular method in the islands. For the wire line combos, anglers will back 80 pound reels with braid or mono and top it off with 500 feet of 110 pound monel. High speed trolling for

Wahoo with C&H lures is also becoming popular with boats trolling up to five lures between 14-18 knots. Wahoo's generally range in size from 25-65 pounds however larger catches are not uncommon. The current island record for Wahoo stands at 146 pounds 2 ounces. Captains will troll in depths ranging from 100 to 700 feet around each island and on the Cayman Bank when targeting Wahoo. During the early morning hours the fish tend to be found in the shallower depths and they move deeper as the day wears on. Wahoo and other pelagic species

can be caught within a quarter mile of shore as the shelf drops off quickly from 60 feet to thousands of feet. Anglers do not have to journey far to find great fishing grounds and multiple catches are quite common.

Dolphin move through the islands in great numbers during the spring and range from 15 to 50 pounds. Trolling weed-lines offshore with a mixture of lures and Ballyhoo will result in a few Dolphin finding their way into the fish box. Frigate birds also lead boats to schools of Dolphin feeding on Flying fish, giving anglers the opportunity to toss a Yo-Zuri 3D popper or naked Ballyhoo in front of a hungry bull and then holding on for an epic struggle as the Dolphin entertains the crew with stunning acrobatics. Captains typically deploy a mixed spread and troll up to 15 miles offshore searching for the weed lines and or Frigate birds when fishing for Dolphin.



Blue and White Marlin are caught during every month of the year, however higher numbers are caught in the spring and summer months. Blues can also be found along the weed lines feeding on younger Dolphin and some crews will troll for both Marlin and Dolphin at the same time. A typical Marlin spread will consist of 4-8 lines with a mixture of lures and rigged horse Ballyhoo. Most Captains target the Blues north of the island between the drop and 10 miles off as well as between the Cayman Bank and the Northwest point of the island. Blues in the spring range from 100-250 pounds and the 400+ pound fish show up in June and July.

There are a number of tournaments held in the Cayman Islands each year with the largest being the Cayman Islands International Fishing Tournament held each spring, which offers over \$200,000 in cash and prizes. ☑

For more information on fishing in the Cayman Islands, please visit the Cayman Islands Angling Club website at: www.fishcayman.com.