

ROXTONS FIELD SPORTS

Christopher Robinson reports on his recent trip to Los Roques

We returned again this year to Los Roques as a team of seven for the annual Roxtons hosted trip. It was a resounding success and reinforced my view that Los Roques provides not only the finest bone fishing but also a wonderfully relaxed holiday for both fishers and non-fishers.

The early months of the year normally provide stable weather conditions; this year was no exception and we were blessed with excellent conditions. Indeed an advantage of Los Roques is that it lies south of the hurricane belt and the fishing remains first class all year.

We were a group of mixed abilities – some had fished Cuba before, others had fished Los Roques and Rory T had not saltwater fly fished before. Rory set the pace early on landing ten bone fish on his first day. His smile and relief when we met at close of play was obvious – there is quite a big change in both technique and tackle between still water fishing in UK and the bone fish flats. Bone fish do not give you many chances so getting the first cast right is important. The ‘strike’ is utterly different and then all hell lets loose as the bone runs you swiftly into the backing.

The Sightcast team who run the fishing have an excellent selection of well-maintained tackle to hire. This is a distinct advantage for those, like Rory T, who want to try bone fishing but do not want to commit straight away to the investment needed in a new rod, line and reel. For \$15 a day Sightcast can equip you with suitable gear, they have a wide selection of styles (actions) of rods and this makes all the difference for a novice in learning which the right set up for them is. Other operations might have *some* kit available, but generally I have found it poorly maintained and with limited choice.



There are always lessons to be learnt and having a calm, unflustered guide makes all the difference. I have seen some pretty tough and aggressive saltwater guides over the past few decades, and actually you end up resenting them and getting flustered yourself, whatever your ability. The Los Roques guides are quite the opposite – calm, helpful, not pushy and with just the right degree of humour to settle you down when you muck up.

With many American fishers now opting to try Cuba as it opens up to them the Los Roques flats are quiet and for the second year running we hardly saw another party fishing. The flats are really well rested and the numbers of bone fish – and their size – just as good as ever. We caught very few under 2lbs with most in the 3lb – 5lb range and a decent number of larger fish, the biggest, a fish of a life time, was comfortably over 10lbs and landed by Tiffinie P after a nervous 20 minute battle.

In 2013 we had seen a good number of tarpon, last year fewer and this year there were only a handful of large ones in the bay despite there being shoals of bait fish. However we did see more permit than ever. Rory had a good chance at two on his first day! And we had several other chances but none converted into takes – they really are the most difficult of fish, hence I guess the framed photo in pride of place when you do land one. We had fun chasing barracuda, horse eyed jacks, yellow tailed snappers and bonito (which give the most amazing fight for their size).

This year we decided to break up the trip with a ‘day off’ so we fished the first three days and on the fourth took a boat out to a remote island 20 minutes away called Crasqui. Crasqui has a beautiful, deserted beach of some 3 km and we were delivered there with large



umbrellas for shade, chairs, swimming towels, cool boxes with ice, drinks and a pic-nic. We had a wonderful day, walking, reading, collecting shells, swimming and of course fishing for the numerous bone fish patrolling the beach and for bonito that were crashing the minnows and baitfish within casting distance.

The programme at Los Roques is totally flexible and if you have the time and want to slow down the pace of the trip a day off on a beach like Crasqui is just the tonic you need to add a chill factor into the holiday.

Julie B was a non-fishing guest, and Tiffy P was a part-time fisher. They both benefited from the larger boats that Los Roques offers compared to other destinations. With a guide and boatman and a large awning the setup is perfect for a non-fishing partner (or a part time fisher) to accompany you; they can swim, snorkel, read, walk a beach, doze in the sun or troll a lure or two while you stalk the flats.

The staff at Posada Acuarela were as hospitable and helpful as ever, the food quite delicious and this year we took advantage of after fishing massages on the flower covered roof terrace followed by the traditional mojitos watching the sun go down.

We will be returning next year, if you would like to join our hosted trip or require further details on Los Roques please contact Christopher Robinson.

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