

# *Isla Montuosa*

FANTASY ISLAND FOUND

[CAPTAIN MIKE GENOUN]







# Isla Montuosa

➔ For enthusiastic anglers with a taste for travel and adventure, there are a number of exotic destinations worth exploring. World-class fisheries compliment these breathtaking locales, where mere words and photos alone cannot paint an accurate picture. Panama's rich Pacific Coast is one such sport fishing Mecca that leaves visitors thirsty for more.

Panama is home to numerous legendary fisheries, although none are as famous as Hannibal Bank—one of the most storied big game fishing destinations on the globe. And while this deepwater trench is certainly a focal point for visiting anglers in search of acrobatic billfish and prized yellowfin tuna, it's not the only game in town.

Not far up the chain of islands that comprise Coiba National Park is a small landmass protruding from the sea known simply as Isla Montuosa. The name alone sounds romantic and sparks conversation, but there are no resorts, fishing lodges or marinas on Montuosa. Unless you are willing to rough it in a tent on a desolate jungle island you'll likely never step foot on land. That's okay, because this piscatorial paradise can be fully appreciated from its surrounding waters.

Roughly 60 miles off the coast, Isla Montuosa is the go-to destination for local skippers fishing out of



Panama Big Game Fishing Club, recent recipient of *Florida Sport Fishing's* 5-Star Excellence Award. Constructed on Isla Boca Brava,

just one hour from Panama's second largest city, Panama Big Game Fishing Club is a modern marvel all its own. How such a well appointed lodge was built on the cliffs of a remote jungle island in the first place is an incred-

▲ Some of the world's best dolphin fishing occurs along the Pacific Coast of Panama.

ible feat in itself. The only way on and off the rock is by boat!

At Panama Big Game, guests live like royalty while their ev-

ery need is taken care of. Imagine hitting the dock after a fantastic day on the water to a welcoming Piña Colada and refreshing wet towel. You'll feel guilty cooling off in the infinity pool as you swim up to the bar for a fresh cocktail and regionally inspired hors d'oeuvres. While you review photos from the day on the poolside flat screen, the chef will be hard at work preparing a gourmet four-course meal to enjoy in the clubhouse before heading back to the soothing hot tub for a nightcap. And don't worry about staying in touch with friends and family, because the private villas are equipped intelligent entertainment systems with smart TV and high-speed Internet access. And let's not forget about daily laundry service.

Equally important, the facility's Bertram and fleet of Carolina Classics are superbly outfitted with the finest tackle including 2-speed Tiagras for heavy-duty offshore battles and bulletproof Stellas matched to custom sticks for popping duties. This is one of those destinations where you don't need to bring any fishing gear. Panama Big Game Fishing Club has it

▼ In these distant waters, big baits catch big fish!





# *Isla Montuosa*

► Captain Mike Genoun with a gargantuan 89 pound Pacific cubera.



# Isla Montuosa

all and they've made it a point to provide guests with the very best of everything.

Fishing Montuosa is fairly straightforward, however the species you encounter will vary from day to day. During our recent visit, mornings started with a 5:30 a.m. knock on the door accompanied by fresh juice and coffee. A made-to-order breakfast was next, followed by a swift departure to the fertile fishing grounds. The first 30 minutes leave you awe-inspired by a gorgeous sunrise and breathtaking landscapes. The rest of the time ticks by as you dream of upcoming encounters.

Once on scene, the trolling ritual includes deploying a spread of six or seven lines and a teaser thrown into the mix. Proven chuggers and jets along with rigged ballyhoo produce 25- to 40-pound dolphin, feisty Pacific sailfish and hard fighting yellowfin tuna while waiting for a blue or black marlin to crash the party. To entice big billfish, live bonito can be caught on scene and pulled across the bait rich bank. This is also the choice approach for connecting with cow tuna. Mammoth yellowfin hit the deck here every month of the year and nearly all are taken on live bonito.

The region's diverse fishery is remarkable due to the unique bathymetry dominated by pronounced undersea structure. The submerged banks and pinnacles along the shelf are fed by the Humboldt Current, which drives cold, nutrient-rich water up from the ocean floor. These nutrients support microscopic life, which in turn supports huge concentrations of baitfish, and you can follow the food chain up from there. It's not uncommon



to run across acres of boiling tuna or witness aggressive black marlin chasing down their next meal.

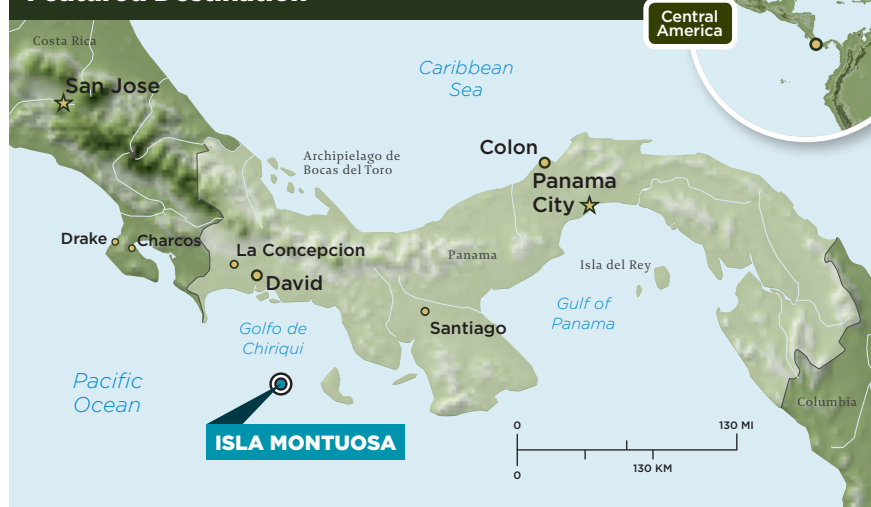
After four days on the water, I can't tell you how many big fish we released. And while we never got a shot at a blue or black marlin, we certainly had no reason to complain—especially when you consider trolling is just the start of this success story. Along with all of the drag screaming thrills, we also invested quite a bit of time casting heavy poppers toward rocky shorelines for smashing battles with roosterfish, bluefin trevally and the most aggressive amberjack I've ever seen. Astonish-

▲ Yellowfin tuna feeding frenzies are common occurrences.

ingly, this near-shore excitement also fell short of the most rewarding part of our angling adventure.

Each afternoon as the sun reached its highest point in the sky, when pelagic game fish typically sound in search of cooler conditions, we shifted gears toward bottom fishing. Setting up on

## Featured Destination



## Trouble Free Tropics

Coiba National Park encompasses a vast majority of the Gulf of Chiriqui's continental shelf and 38 island structures. The region offers incredible ecological biodiversity, with white sand beaches, lush waters, hardwood tropical forests and wildlife found nowhere else in the world. Thankfully, the Panamanian government has banned large longlining operations and purse seiners from these waters. The local panga fleet still hits it hard and strict limitations are in place, although rarely enforced. We can only hope that Coiba National Park continues to receive the recognition and protection it deserves as a world-class angling destination. Without protection from over fishing, Panama's rich Pacific Coast risks losing its most valuable asset.



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# Isla Montuosa



“  
**You'll feel guilty cooling off in the infinity pool as you swim up to the bar for a fresh cocktail...**

thumps signaled a fanged-tooth beast viciously ripping apart our large offerings. At this point it only takes a quick shift of the lever drag to pin you to the gunwale in a battle for supremacy. While not every fight ended in victory, enough did. The overall tally was a dozen menacing cubera snapper easily surpassing the coveted 50 pound mark, with a personal best 89 pound brute that I later learned would have shattered the existing Pacific cubera snapper IGFA All Tackle World Record.

While an abundance of prized game fish will highlight any foreign fishing excursion, when fishing Panama one can't ignore the dense foliage and diverse wildlife. You will be mesmerized by the surrounding perfection. Fishing around Coiba or any of the nearby islands is like stepping back in time to an era where uninhabited beaches were just that. This is a dreamy place where chaotic feeding frenzies unfold daily as savage game fish attack from below and screeching birds crash from above. Let me close by saying that this entire region is simply magical.

Panama is a special place where even a bad day ends with sore arms and stories of monster fish that didn't get away. **FSF**

## Loving Life

Under new ownership, Panama Big Game Fishing Club has emerged as the choice of both professional and novice anglers looking for a once in a lifetime vacation. A recent multimillion-dollar upgrade means this quaint resort is sure to impress even the most discriminating traveler, man or woman. If you've never visited Panama, look no further. This is the place for you with all-inclusive packages that will put you on big fish! If you've fished Panama before then you know what's in store when you head offshore. At Panama Big Game Fishing Club, visitors can design a custom itinerary for up to 16 guests, or follow the lodge's recommendations. Either way you can expect an experience you will be raving about for years to come. While direct flights from Miami to David, Panama are on the drawing board, guests currently fly to Panama City to connect with a 40 minute commuter flight to Tocumen Airport. Upon arrival, visitors can expect VIP service and transportation in the lap of luxury en route to their final destination.

► **Panama Big Game Fishing Club**  
866.281.1225  
panama-sportfishing.com

pronounced reefs we proceeded to deploy live bonito into the depths in search of hungry cubera snapper.

Anyone who has fished Coiba or Hannibal knows they call Panama's prolific Pacific Coast "Jurassic Park" for good reason. Not only are you expecting King Kong to pop out of the jungle at any moment, but mostly because the fish here are big and ferocious!

As we drifted across the submerged peaks and valleys, sharp

▲ Not much beats a swim-up bar after a long day on the water.

▼ Anglers retreat to stunning villas with all of the amenities of home.

