

THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED

Recently discovered, Panama's newest island lodge offers a world-class angling adventure that is guaranteed to leave you in awe.

ARTICLE AND PHOTOS BY **STEVE DOUGHERTY**

Among anglings elite clientele, prime locations around the world are far from a secret. St. Thomas has an unparalleled blue marlin bite, Cabo San Lucas is world-renowned for its winter striped marlin population, Guatemala is known for its sheer number of sailfish and Panama, well Panama has it all! However, the logistics of reaching what are arguably the world's most fertile fisheries can prove to be a traveler's worst nightmare and better suited for a long-range expedition yacht. That is until now!





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Four-years in the making, Propiedad de Paradise is Panama's only exclusive island fishing lodge. Situated in the heart of the Chiriquí Marine Sanctuary, near the Costa Rican border and approximately 10-miles offshore of David, the base camp on Isla Par-

ida offers adventurous anglers easy access to uncrowded and unspoiled world-class fishing in a wide variety of venues. Not to mention a picturesque island setting with breathtaking views of tropical blue seas,



white sand beaches and swaying palm trees. Best of all, the well-equipped lodge lies in close proximity to what are arguably the best blue water fisheries in the entire world. The highly-regarded Hannibal Bank and Coiba Island, as well as lesser known but equally as impressive locales of Isla Montuosa, Islas Secas and Isla Ladroneas are all within a short reach and easily accessible

If you're interested in the angling adventure of a lifetime you owe it to yourself to visit Isla Parida.



on any given day. The beauty of this unique and exotic lodge is that its prime location eliminates the long boat ride to and from the fishing grounds so you can spend more time catching and less time "running." At Propiedad de Paradise a full day of fishing is actually a full day of fishing.

OPPORTUNITY ARISES

One night after a few too many cocktails with close friend Captain Ben Espinoza, I was enlightened about the opening of an exotic lodge in the northern stretches of the rugged Pacific Ocean. "My boss just opened a fishing lodge in Panama and he wants you to come check it out to shoot some photos for his website." Remarked Captain Ben. I almost choked on the lime as I poured the rum and coke down the front of my shirt.

Only a week later and I found myself on a flight from Miami to Panama City, en route to Isla Parida. With the lodge's inaugural charter only a week before my visit highlighted by an estimated 180-pound yellowfin tuna, 70-pound dogtooth snapper and several blue marlin, my expectations were sky high. What makes this area so remarkable is the unique bathymetry dominated by undersea canyons.

Yellowfin tuna rule the waters during the summer months and the preferred tactic for busting bruiser tuna is with the use of heavy braided line, stiff popping rods and powerful Shimano Saragosas.



Hefty yellowfin tuna are one of many species awaiting the arrival of adventurous anglers.



These features create nutrient rich banks and pinnacles that often peak less than 30-feet from the surface, forcing copious amounts of forage to the surface with highly prized pelagics hot on their tails.

On our first day we were headed to Isla Montuosa – an uninhabited island located approximately 20-miles from Isla Parida. Montuosa is approximately 10-miles from

the Hannibal Bank and the depths rise abruptly from the abyssal plains, with the 1,000-fathom line only a few miles off. The plan was to slow-troll live bonito in hopes of hooking a brute billfish. While working the bountiful blue water for marlin, we were simultaneously casting huge surface poppers from the bow of the 26-foot Sea Craft, hoping to excite big fish of any species. While one of our live baits raised a blue after only a short period, we couldn't entice it to strike and moved on in search of more palpable targets. Yellowfin tuna rule the waters during the summer months and the preferred tactic for busting bruiser tuna is with the use of heavy braided line, stiff popping rods and powerful Shimano Saragosas. I can tell you for certain that after bagging a few beefy tuna on spinning tackle, you will have a new respect for these pelagic powerhouses.

On our second day we were headed to the world-renowned Hannibal Bank,

Where To Toss The Bags

The easiest way to access the fertile fisheries that encompass the Chiriquí Marine Sanctuary and Hannibal Bank is to fly to Panama City, Panama. I highly suggest you spend at least one day exploring the city before or after your trip to Isla Parida. The Panama Canal and Casco Viejo (Old Town) are two of many must-see attractions. There are daily regional flights to the city of David from Panama City on both Air Panama and Aeroperlas to Enrique Malek Airport. Once you land in David you will be greeted by your U.S. Coast Guard English speaking certified captains who will take you on a 5-minute ride to the sleepy fishing town of Pedregal. From here a scenic boat ride down the Estero River into the expansive Pacific Ocean will lead you to your private island paradise.

The lodge is remote, yet comfortable. A guest house with a/c, private bath and accommodations to sleep eight, as well as a main house with a well-equipped kitchen and living room provide the perfect platform to search out the Pacific's most powerful predators. On a trip to Isla Parida you will fall into a comfortable routine. Rise in the early A.M. for a quick breakfast before loading the boats for the day's adventure. Fish your heart out until dark when you return to the lodge for a readily awaiting dinner and frothy cocktails to share over fishy stories. As my trip came to an end and I boarded my return flight to Miami, I knew I'd be back. Panama is a wonderful country rich with culture and heritage with friendly people and some of the best action traveling anglers will likely ever experience. If you're the kind of adventurer that likes to experience the road less traveled I highly suggest you visit the remote stretches of Panama's Pacific hot spots.

► **Propiedad de Paradise**
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During the summer months diving birds and surface-busting tuna are common occurrences.

which lies approximately 35-miles offshore. Here, the depths rise from over 2,000-feet and peak less than 125-feet below the surface. Although we got an early start this morning, our run to the grounds was interrupted by numerous stops to investigate fishy flotsam. Once again the surface poppers pulled through with healthy dolphin coming over the gunnel. Once we reached the bank, it was clearly evident that the action for the rest of the day was going to be fast and furious. Baitfish were boiling the surface for as far as the eye could see, with tuna busting through the masses. This was an awesome spectacle and a sight I will remember forever. As the day progressed the bite got better and better as nearly every

cast resulted in a screaming drag from a 20 to 30-pound skipjack. While the yellowfin were nowhere to be found, we had tons of fun fighting the powerful skipjack on light tackle outfits. The afternoon was coming to an end and we decided to pack it up and head home. Approximately 20-miles from Hannibal Bank we stumbled across an enormous school of porpoise. Every blue water angler knows that tuna and porpoise have a symbiotic relationship, feeding and hunting together in large schools. The green water didn't look promising, but while we were deploying our first live bait it got picked up in free spool only seconds after putting it in the water. We boated two healthy fish for table fare and continued to

▼ **The Panama Canal is a man-made engineering marvel and a must-see on any visit to Panama.**

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With fishing pressure almost non-existent, gaffer dolphin can be found on nearly every piece of fishy flotsam.

fun fish with circle-hooks, releasing 10 yellowfin over 60-pounds. It was quite an amazing sight to witness Captain Shane Jarvis grab the free-swimming tuna by the tail and muscle them into the boat to retrieve the circle-hook before release. In all of my years I've never intentionally released a tuna, but with two healthy fish in the box and a chest freezer already full of fresh tuna steaks, harvesting any more fish was simply unnecessary.

“ **...our release numbers were quite impressive - four 20 to 30-pound roosters with a trophy breaking free at boatside.** ”

On our third day we all woke with sore arms and backs from battling the previous days' pelagics, so we decided to start our day close to Isla Parida in search of exotic roosterfish. After loading the livewell in a matter of minutes, we were only a stones throw from the lodge before we deployed our first frisky

Roosterfish rule the inshore waters with frisky blue runner yielding impressive strikes.

blue runner. Soon after we were tight with the first Pez Gallo of the day. Only an hour later and our release numbers were quite impressive - four 20 to 30-pound roosters with a trophy breaking free at boatside. The next couple of days provided more of the same action. We caught some amazing trophies, enjoyed delicious, authentic table fare, and were in the company of great friends. What more could you ask for in the land of paradise. **PSF**



Notes of Interest About Panama

- **Official Name:** Republic of Panama
- **Area:** 30,193 sq. mi.
- **Capital:** Panama City
- **Population:** 3,310,000 (2008 Census)
- **Government:** Constitutional Democracy
- **Weather:** Panama has two distinct seasons - The dry season which stretches from January through April and the wet season from May through December.
- **Language:** Spanish is the official language, but many Panamanians speak fluent English.
- **Currency:** While the Panamanian Balboa is recognized as the currency, U.S. dollars are the official tender.

Panama's history has been largely influenced by its strategic location between the Caribbean Sea and Pacific Ocean. As an essential transit point for gold and silver headed for Spain, the waters surrounding Panama were a pirate's match made in heaven. While bootlegging pirates flocked to Panama for precious gems and metals, today's modern day swashbucklers flock to Panama for the incredible angling action. The species of game fish are just as varied as the areas they can be found. Blue and black marlin, sailfish, yellowfin and skipjack tuna, dolphin, roosterfish, bluefin trevally, corvina, cubera and dogtooth snapper are just a few of the available species ready to stretch your string.