

AQUARIUS

Cozumel's Premier Fishing Guide

COZUMEL BONEFISHING ADVENTURE

My wife and I recently had the opportunity to go on vacation to Playa Del Carmen in Mexico. Naturally, my fly fishing tackle went with me.

As soon we arrived at our hotel, I started making inquiries about a bonefishing guide. Fortunately, Enrique from Best Day Travels, who ran the tour desk at the hotel, knew of someone. He put me in contact with Carlos Vega, who operates Aquarius Fishing in Cozumel. Carlos arranged with his guide for the following day and planned to meet me on Cozumel when I arrived. I caught the 6:00 a.m. ferry from Playa Del Carmen, which in rough seas can be an adventure unto itself. This ferry is a supersonic missile, which smashed through two and a half to three meter (8'-10') waves. Judging by my stomach, I'm sure we caught air a half dozen times as we plowed wildly through the swells. The ferries side windows were solidly streaked with salt and I had difficulties viewing the horizon, which is my way I keep from getting sea sick. Although I managed not to throw up during the 35-minute ride across, I felt pretty queasy once we landed.

Carlos met me as promised and quickly transferred me to the boat where I met my guide for the day also named Enrique. After quick introductions, we were off on the thirty-five-minute ride towards northern Cozumel. Noticing how quiet my guide was I asked him "Habla Ingles?". He replied with a smile, "Poco" meaning "little" and asked, "Habla Espanol?" I laughed, as I also had to reply, "Poco". It was going to be an interesting day. However, I didn't need to worry as fishing has its own universal language and we managed to communicate very well between English and Spanish.



After thirty minutes of pounding through waves we finally got to the lagoon. I didn't need any further encouragement as he hopped out and indicated for me to get my gear ready, which I quickly did. Enrique closely inspected all my knots and then wanted to see my fly box. He chose a size 8 tan Crazy Charlie and knotted it on with a non-slip loop

knot. The speed with which he did this told me I was in good hands.

“Let’s go” he said and we took off through the jungle on a well trodden path. After only a 20 second walk we came upon an enormous lagoon. Enrique stopped immediately and pointed at the water. “Bones”, he said. And sure enough, practically right at my feet was a school of tailing bonefish. This was unbelievable, I thought, and as we edged out onto the water and started fishing I realized it was true. We literally came across hundreds of bonefish that day and if you missed a shot at one you didn’t have to wait long before encountering more.

I had lots of follows to start with and after an hour I inquired about changing flies. “Good fly”, Enrique said and we continued to fish but after several more refusals he finally indicated for me to haul out my fly box. After selecting and tying on a size 8 Bonefish Special we continued and I was quickly rewarded with my first bone of the day. The color change had made the difference and I landed 3 and broke off 1 on some sharp rocks in the next two and a half hours including my biggest of around two kilograms (4 pounds). We encountered lots of bones in schools but also stalked many doubles and triples. Some of the tails were very big indicating fish in excess of two and a half kilograms (5 pounds).

Weather conditions were less than ideal as we had a constant wind of forty to fifty kilometers per hour (25-33 m.p.h.) and lots of cloud. This helped to camouflage us and my casts, but also made it very difficult to spot fish and we were practically stepping on fish before we spooked them.



One of the most exciting occurrences was watching several fish following my fly to within three meters (10’) before turning away. By this time, we were both crouched so low our butts were in the water and my leader was inside the guides. I’m thankful that

fish didn't hit then as there was almost no way I could set the hook on a fish that close and not break him off.

Keeping these fast running fish from wrapping you around protruding rocks, sticks and small islands proved exciting and challenging. However, the major challenge came in encountering fish at close range and trying to cast six meters (20') of line in a forty to fifty kilometer per hour (25-33 m.p.h.) head wind.

If you want to practice your casting for bones, take a few hula-hoops out to the ball field on a windy day and place them at six-meter (20') intervals. Practice at different angles to the wind until you can consistently get the fly in the hoop within 3 false casts. Then you're ready for these fish.

After 4 hours of fishing we went back to the boat for lunch. Carlos had packed a wonderful and very large lunch along with plenty of cervesas and water, after eating we got back to fishing and after another hour and a half and many more chances we called it a day. We would have to hurry for me to catch the 4:00 p.m. ferry back to Playa Del Carmen.

Was bonefishing really worth this, I thought? You bet! Stalking these fish in fifteen to forty-five centimeters (6-18 inches) of water in such a beautiful setting can't be beat and I can't wait to get back to doing it again. As it turned out, Enrique had a VHF radio on board so I had no reason to worry about returning. Enrique radioed ahead and Carlos met us back at the docks. I was quickly shuttled over to the ferry terminal where I caught the 5:00 p.m. sailing back to Playa Del Carmen.

Carlos runs a first-class operation and employs first class guides. I highly recommend him as an outfitter when vacationing in Cancun, Playa Del Carmen, or Cozumel. Fly fishing tackle is included in the price of the day along with a very large lunch and all the water and beer you can drink. He uses 8 and 9 weight Redington rods and Scientific Angler System two reels. Only floating lines were needed for this spectacular fishing as the water was never more than forty-five centimeters (18 inches) deep.

Check out Carlo's excellent website at www.cozumelflatsfishing.com for further information and E-mail address at: info@cozumelflatsfishing.com

Toll Free number: 1-800-371-2924, or 1-(954)-317-3743.