

## Costa Rica

Over the past several years, the Central American country of Costa Rica exploded as a must-visit eco-tourism hot spot. Costa Rica set aside almost 20 percent of its land in the form of national parks and protected areas, and visitors can enjoy everything from zipping through the jungle on elevated cables to hiking at the foot of an active volcano. And the fishing ain't half bad either!

Just a 2½-hour flight from most southern U.S. cities, Costa Rica offers up some of the world's best light-tackle

action. World-record seekers come here for the large numbers of jumbo Pacific sailfish and the swarms of small blue and striped marlin that move in and feed during Costa Rica's dry season, which lasts from December through March — although this year the bite lasted well into June. All of these species swimming in the same water makes Costa Rica one of the premier spots to pursue a grand slam. Since most of the fish you see will be on the small side — except for the monster-size sails — most anglers fish with 20- to 30-pound tackle and pitch ballyhoo to fish raised on the teasers.

There's no more exciting way to fish for blues, stripes and sails, and Costa Rica sits atop the list when it comes to the pursuit of light-tackle marlin releases.

Los Sueños Resort and Marina at Herradura Bay on the Pacific side represents the most luxurious and hassle-free spot to fish in Costa Rica. Sumptuous accommodations, one of the most modern marinas in Central America and a plethora of charter opportunities make Los Sueños a must-stop spot for traveling boats and visiting anglers alike.

If you want to step away from the limelight a bit, try fishing up the coast in Playa Carrillo. This sleepy village hosts the country's best marlin bites, and a good number of charter boats — and world-record seekers — make this sheltered little bay their home from January through March.

A stable government and an eco-friendly national policy make Costa Rica an attractive destination whether you decide to wet a line or not.

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## Isla Mujeres, Mexico

For some reason or another, it took me 18 years to get around to visiting Isla Mujeres, Mexico, one of the first hot billfish destinations discovered by traveling American sport-fishers. After hosting a stellar Marlin U session there this past year, I can assure you that it definitely won't be another 18!

Meaning the "Isle of Women," Isla Mujeres lies just a short 20-minute ferry ride from the coast of Cancún. This little bit of paradise hosts an amazing sailfish bite each winter and spring, with ravenous packs of sails balling shoals of sardines at the surface. Some of the sport's earliest travelers used to make the 350-mile trip from Miami to Isla Mujeres each



Although you can expect to catch a multitude of big Pacific sails on a trip to Costa Rica, the country's world-class eco-tourism opportunities add to its allure.