



HUNTING WITH FLY ROD AND REEL



The ultimate “hunting” experience with a rod and reel is stalking fish on the saltwater flats. The primary shallow water target species that make this challenge so exciting are bonefish, tarpon, permit, and snook. Generally, this sight-fishing pursuit is done from a skiff that is propelled over the flats by a skilled guide, using a pole to quietly move the boat, or, sometimes by the angler wading in shallow water. (Baby Tarpon at left)

One of the top places on the globe for flats fishing is the Sian Ka'an Biosphere, located approximately 100 miles south of Cancun, Mexico. This

World Heritage Site is a protected area that covers 2000 square miles of wetland, mangrove channels, coastline, and includes two massive bays, Ascension Bay and Espiritu Santo Bay. It begins just south of the Mayan ruins at Tulum and extends southward to beyond the southern edge of Espiritu Santo Bay. It is an amazing marine eco-environment. And, most important, this is a shallow water environment that is home for permit, baby tarpon, snook, and bonefish (above).



Almost all of the shallow water Caribbean salt water fish can be encountered here (barracuda, jacks, snappers, etc), but the primary species pursued are permit (at left), bonefish, snook, and baby tarpon (“babies” are 5 to 30#). If you are relatively new to fly fishing salt water, this is a good place to begin to learn the skills needed to fish the shallow flats from a poled skiff. Your first permit (fly fishing’s Holy Grail) is a lifetime fishing memory and this area is a likely place to get that first one.

The Sian Ka'an Biosphere may be the best place in the world to catch an

IGFA Inshore Grand Slam (taking any 3 of bonefish, snook [at right], permit, and tarpon in one day) and Super Grand Slam (releasing all 4 in one day). Note: the IGFA, in their annual 400 page publication on world fishing records, has a special section recognizing all Grand Slams and Super Grand Slams. All three of my personal Grand Slams are mentioned here plus my one Super Grand Slam, all taken in the Sian Ka'an during my early days as a salt water fly fisher in the late 80's and early 90's.

I recently returned from a trip to Playa Blanca Lodge on Espiritu Santo Bay in the Sian Ka'an Biosphere. I was accompanied by three anglers who had no experience with sight fishing in a situation where these species could be taken: bonefish, permit, baby tarpon, and snook (at right). One of them had a day where he released 16 bonefish. We took all of the species during our week, and each of them took a permit and two of them had a three permit day!



It was an outstanding week and a great tropical adventure. Comment from Jeff Reinke, one of the limited experience flat's anglers on the trip and took his first saltwater flats Grand Slam: "When I learned that bonefish, tarpon, permit and snook were all real opportunities, I was all in on this adventure. This was a great chance to add to my species list. I can now say I've caught all of them."

LOGISTICS: From Northern California, United has non-stop flights from SFO to Cancun. There are some "world class" fly fishing lodges located in the Sian Ka'an. To reach them, you take a 45 minute charter flight south from Cancun and that charter flight is included in their packages.

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