

Fishing Zanzibar

We are fortunate in having superb fishing almost all the year, and Zanzibar Big Game Fishing is synonymous with the finest fishing in Zanzibar. Some of the most exhilarating and challenging deep-sea fishing is available. Traditionally when the Kaskazi (north east monsoon) blows, the billfish arrive in great numbers. There are two very definite seasons, the Yellowfin Tuna season, which runs from August through to the end of October, and the Marlin season, which runs from December to mid March. [Click here](#) to view some recent catches. Which fish can I expect to catch and when?

Billfish

The Pemba Channel provides us with six species of billfish including Black, Blue and Striped Marlin, Sailfish, Broadbill Swordfish and the elusive Shortbill Spearfish, so your chances of catching a grand slam (1 each of any 3 billfish in one day) is very real.

Striped Marlin

Striped Marlin are the most prolific of the Marlin and they seasonally migrate through the natural corridor between Pemba Island and the mainland. The Striped Marlin is well-known for its fighting ability and is renowned for its speed and acrobatic displays. It has a reputation for spending more time in the air than in the water just after it is hooked. In addition to long runs and tail walks, it will 'greyhound' across the surface, making a dozen or more long, graceful leaps. Compared to a Blue or a Black it is considerably more slender and is the most colourful of all Marlin. Just before striking or when the Striped Marlin is annoyed, fourteen iridescent blue lines spark up the Marlin's body. It is one of those must see moments - a Striped Marlin lighting up to strike one of your baits. Striped Marlin are most prolific from November to March, sometimes showing in packs of up to ten, which makes it a good chance of getting a personal best. Season - The prime Marlin season runs from mid November to end of March. In March it would seem that the fish are much larger than average.

Black Marlin

A highly rated game fish, the Black Marlin has the power, size and persistence of which anglers dream! This Marlin has tremendous power, and is known for its long runs and tail walking. Black Marlin in East African waters are generally larger than the other Marlin and have short, heavy bodies with the fins virtually locked in position. Black Marlin have been caught weighing over 2000lb by commercial fishermen. The Black Marlin is noted as a violent feeder at the top of the food chain and feeds on other game fish and small bait fish. Remember, if you do get a strike give the Marlin plenty of time to swallow the bait.

Season - During August to the end of October, large Blacks can be found amongst the Tuna. The prime Marlin season runs from mid November to end of March.

Blue Marlin

The Blue Marlin is the largest of the Marlin family. It is a more streamlined version of the Black Marlin. It has a long slender bill extending up to a virtual point on the top of the head where the dorsal fin slants, resulting in a huge speed take off compared to other Marlin. The Blue is a powerful aggressive fighter, known for its impressive athletic abilities on the surface, clearing the water time and time again. They run hard and long, and leap high into the air in a seemingly inexhaustible display of strength, although they are prone to going deep to conserve their energy. The Blue is known to charge a lure on a number of occasions, so be patient until a good hook up can be achieved.

Season - During August to end October large Blues can be found amongst the Tuna. Blues and Blacks follow, and gorge on, the shoals of Yellowfin Tuna at this time of the year and are usually fatter than later in the season. The prime Marlin season runs from mid November to end of March.

Broadbill

Broadbill (*Xiphias gladius*) is known as the 'Gladiator of the Sea' due to its reputation of being the toughest of all the billfish with a violent mood, and is considered by many to be the toughest of all billfish to catch - the ultimate challenge in big game fishing. Characteristically, it has a smooth, very broad, flattened sword (broadbill) that is significantly longer and wider than the bill of any other billfish. It has considerable big blue eyes, and is a ferocious night feeder. They are deep-water predators and are known to go to depths of at least 550m. They are finicky, easily frightened and rarely strike blindly. When hooked it takes deep and rapid dives and with the combination of the soft flesh around the mouth and its slashing bill (sword) it makes for a real challenge to catch.

Season - all year but best in October, November and March when the seas are very calm. December before the wind goes round to the north-east can also be an excellent time for Broadbill fishing.

Sailfish

The Sailfish is one of the most strikingly colourful game fish of all - its outstanding feature is the long, high first dorsal which is slate or cobalt blue with a scattering of black spots. Its body is dark blue and silver and lights up with white dots and lines of electric blue. It is a very acrobatic fish and will dive quicker than the marlin because of its size and surrounds. They are a migratory species usually travelling alone or in small groups. Its fighting ability and spectacular aerial

acrobatics endear the Sailfish to the saltwater angler, but it tires quickly and is considered a light tackle species. Season - are seen and caught throughout the fishing season but most prolific during December and January.

Shortbill Spearfish

This elusive game fish does exist in the waters of the Pemba Channel, but is infrequently encountered and rarely seen and caught. It is a highly migratory deep-water species feeding at or near the surface on medium-sized fish, including Dorado, Flying Fish and Pilot Fish, Squid and Crustaceans. They appear to be available all year in small numbers. Fishing methods are the same as for other billfish but with a maximum weight of 52kg this is a light tackle contender. Season - mid November to end of March with December being the best month.

Tuna - angling on adrenaline

From August we start to see large numbers of migrating Yellowfin Tuna, which are, pound for pound, one of the strongest fish that swim and can put up a challenging fight. These swift, sleek marauders of the worlds' oceans can be picked out from their close relatives by their bright yellow finlets and belly, which sometimes show a series of about 20 vertical rows of whitish spots. These high-speed vagabonds are the quintessence of hydrodynamic perfection in design for speed, and often reach about five feet in length. They make transoceanic journeys on a regular basis. Tuna school primarily by size and 12 - 20lb outfits are ideal for schools of small Tuna that run in the season, providing really good sport for the light tackle enthusiast.

Season - August to October provides excellent sport for Tuna. Multiple hook ups are normal when the ocean can come alive with huge schools in pursuit of smaller fish creating plenty of excitement with all the rods going at once. Some of the Tuna are huge and involve a long, exciting and exhausting fight in the chair.

Lesser Game Fish

Giant Trevally

These fish are common off the Tanzanian waters. Adults are sedentary and are found on reef drop-offs. It is a highly rated sport fish both for its large size and for the strong fight it gives. Large Trevallies have powerful jaws and sharp conical teeth. A tagging programme has found that they are highly territorial.

Kingfish (Scomberomorus commerson)

Also known as Narrow-barred, King or Spanish Macherel, the Kingfish is a highly rated gamefish that sounds often, runs hard and fast and occasionally leaps high.

Dorado (Coryphaena hippurus)

Common name of Dolphin fish - these fish are in no way related to the dolphins. Dorado are found in open water and also near the coast. They are a highly rated gamefish. Hooked Dorado may leap or tail-walk, darting first in one direction and then another. It is believed they can reach speeds of up to 50mph.

Wahoo

A member of the Mackerel family, they have very sharp teeth and are reputed to be one of the fastest fish in the sea. The first scorching run may peel off several hundred yards of line in seconds. Occasionally the fish jumps on the strike and often shakes its head violently when hooked in an effort to free itself.

Barracuda

The species found on the east coast of Africa is the Great Barracuda. The Barracuda occurs offshore and around the reefs and predominantly appear at or near the surface. The larger ones are almost invariably loners. They often strike savagely, and they frequently jump out of the water when hooked.