

# Reader's reports



## Costa Rica Pilgrimage to Golfito.

Several big yellowfin tunas stretched our arm muscles! This 180lb specimen ate a live sardine and took two and a quarter hours to bring to the boat with a spinning rod!



**March 2016. For the third year in a row, my son Franck, his good friend Michel and I were going to Golfito, in the south of Costa Rica, to stay with Yves and Bernadette Harlepp, the French owners of Pesca Pasión.**

In previous years, we had reached Golfito by air, but this time Bernadette chartered a minibus for us, allowing us to discover a little more of this splendid country over the course of a day's drive. At the lodge, we had the pleasure to meet our friends Michel and Fred and enjoy our first rum of the week! We reserved the 38' centre-console boat of the lodge, which can reach a speed of up to 40 knots thanks to its twin 300 hp engines and is able to accommodate four to five fishermen.

On our first day out, we were up at 5am, had breakfast at 5:30 and arrived in port at 6:15. The smiling and experienced capitan, Irving, and his ayudante Jerry, awaited us. As always, our expedition began with the catch of about a hundred "sardinas" in the harbour with sabiki rigs. As soon as the livewell was full we departed for Matapalo

rock which marks the entrance to the great Golfo Dulce, famous for its abundance of cubera snapper, Pacific jacks and big roosterfish.

But a fisherman can only capture what the sea has to offer. The surface waters were unusually warm due to that year's El Niño, and many smaller fish had taken refuge in deeper and cooler waters. Yet the big beasts were still present and we beat our previous records for roosterfish with 40 and 50 pound specimens, and even a 60-pounder in Michel's case! He had waited a decade for that moment.

In the blue waters, just off the coast of the Golfo Dulce, we released twenty-plus sailfish. I even hooked a marlin for the third year running: a 120 kg black specimen in 2014, a 100 kg blue in 2015 and now a striped marlin that must have weighed around 300 lbs (an estimate because I did not land it!)

We were lucky enough to be able to follow a huge humpback whale and an enormous sperm whale for 20 minutes, both of whom put on a show fit for the big screen before diving back into the abyss, no doubt to devour a meal of giant squid in the case of the sperm whale.

El Niño also brought with it large and plentiful yellowfin tuna. We chased them from the surface by following the man-o'-war (frigate) birds and dolphins. Jerry threw a few large live sardines as far as possible from the boat, then with a strong spinning rod sent out a beautiful sardine speared on a circle hook.

We cast repeatedly, in vain, but nonetheless kept our hopes up until, one afternoon, luck finally smiled on us. Franck captured an 80 kg tuna on his little Shimano Stella 14000 filled with 60 lb braid, the fight lasting over two and a quarter hours! Then it was Fred's turn to hook a 40 kg yellowfin on the surface with a stickbait – a truly epic fight! As that evening drew to a close, Franck reeled in a second 40 kg tuna, this time in 20 minutes flat. It will be of no surprise to seasoned fishermen that we drank to our success that night!

We left Yves and Bernadette Harlepp at the small Golfito airport with a big hug and a promise to come back soon and beat our records yet again, God and la Niña (el Niño's sister) willing!

**Michel Allégret  
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Sailfish are numerous in Costa Rican waters off the Pacific coast. Even with the very hot surface temps due to El Niño, we released more than twenty plus a big striped marlin.



Our 38' centre-console, fast and comfortable, perfect for venturing offshore.