

Surf fishing The Los Cabos Coast

By Bill Varney Jr.



Recently, warm and cool water collided and produced one of the richest red tides I've ever seen. Combined with closures and "stay at home" rules the mind does nothing but wander....down south where the breeze is warm and the water shimmers with rings of splashing fish. That far away place is just two hours away by air, in a world of it's own, along the shores of Baja's, Los Cabos.

It's easy to forget that some of the very best fishing (and certainly surf fishing) is along both the Pacific and Sea of Cortez side of the Los Cabos peninsula. Move up the East shore into the gulf or strike out along the West to the challenging Pacific side, all of Los Cabos offers fantastic surf fishing.

With the exception of above average days of wind in March and early April, the remainder of the year provides great options for the surf fisherman. May through November, dorado, tuna, pompano, roosterfish, skates, rays, flounder, grouper, snook, corvina and a long list of fish are biting along the coast. When we make our way into December and through March some of these fish are available along with large numbers of sierra mackerel and

yellowtail. There is really no “off season” along the beach down here where every day provides an opportunity to catch a trophy fish.

Finding fish along the beach of southern Baja is not hard but it sure helps to have a few tips before you go. Three places that I like to fish near the tip are Playa Migrino along the Pacific side about seventeen miles north of Cabo San Lucas, the San Jose Del Cabo harbor which is approximately fifteen miles north-east of Cabo San Lucas and the East Cape, a two-hour car ride from downtown Cabo and well into the Sea of Cortez.



Pacific-side fishing in southern Baja is unique. I suggest if this is your first time fishing there it's best to strike out with a guide like Wesley Brough. Wes grew up in the Cabo San Lucas area and is very knowledgeable about fishing the beaches on the Pacific Coast in southern Baja. Wes provides rods, reels, bait, transportation and instruction. He will meet you or pick you up at your hotel in his new 4WD and take you to one of many great fishing spots. On a recent trip, Wes and I fished along Migrino Beach chasing huge schools of sierra mackerel where Wes and his clients have caught dorado, yellowtail, grouper, roosterfish, snook and huge sharks from the surf---just to mention a few of his eye popping catches. You may reach Wes and read

his postings by contacting him on Facebook under the name “cabosurfcaster.”

When fishing the Pacific coast be ready to gear up. The gear we use in this area is much larger than that we would use inside the calm Sea of Cortez. I like to use a twelve to fourteen foot rod, rated for 60-80lb braid. I prefer a 5000 series-spinning reel loaded with braid and a short three-foot piece of 40-60lb flouro (line test and type can change with circumstances that require heavier line or wire leader). Lure size here starts at three ounces and goes up from there. Our best luck has been with “Ranger” or “Megabait” style lures that are heavy, long, skinny and flashy. Surface poppers and other lures also work well. Your goal here on the Pacific side is a very long cast and fast retrieve. Beaches here are very steep and flow from shallow near shore to hundreds of feet deep, just off shore. Large fish of every variety come close to shore to forage.

When looking for tackle and advice while in Cabo San Lucas try Minerva’s Baja Tackle, both of whom carry surf fishing gear. You may check out and learn more about Minerva’s Baja Tackle at www.minervas.com. If nothing else, stop by for a surf tip or two and have a ice cold cerveza and toasty taco on the way!



Another great spot just up the road from Cabo, near the village of San Jose Del Cabo, is inside the harbor of Puerto Los Cabos (plus a few other spots around the harbor for those who search them out). Puerto Los Cabos has some of the best fishing inside a harbor I've ever seen. Fish there on the east side of the marina. You will find this is the area where the panga fleet is docked. Just to the south is a small mother's beach with a buoy line that separates it from the harbor entrance. Just outside the buoy line are several live bait slammers—so you don't have to be a rocket scientist to see the benefit of fishing there. Be aware that you may be in a no fishing area so ask the locals. Fish early and at sunset when it's less crowded.



Inside this harbor you'll encounter pompano, roosterfish, sierra, angel rays and various jack. Downsize your equipment here by using a medium weight spinning or casting rod. I like to use a reel loaded with twelve to twenty pound monofilament on an eight or nine foot medium heavy surf rod. Braid works fine here but because of the granite boulders used to build the harbor a snag here by a big fish trying to escape out toward the Gordo Bank can mean real trouble. Mono will give you some flexibility and a shot of getting some line back if you do get snagged or a massive hammerhead inhales your bait.

Several lures work exceptionally well fishing this area and up coast toward the East Cape. I like to use lures here that have more retrieval movement than those I use on the Pacific coast. Krocodiles, plugs, hardbaits (Rapalla XRap/Lucky Craft Lures Flash Minnow) and a wide spectrum of casting lures work great. The one common denominator I've found over the years is that lures with red or pink stripes seem to attract the most attention and bites. $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ ounce weight work great and you can cast them a mile with a medium spincast outfit.

One of my favorite rigs for the beach here is the bobber and feather combo. Use a clear bobber that can be filled with water for weight. Using a swivel, attach a four-foot leader and a bonito feather. Cast the rig as far out as you can—which is a long way. Retrieve with moderate speed and “splash” the bobber occasionally on the way in. For a bit of diversion tie on a hard bait and just reel. Don't be surprised if a thirty-pound yellowfin tuna jumps on the hook!

Now that we're rigged it's up the coast to the East Cape. Gone is the big city and hustle and bustle of Cabo San Lucas. Replaced by calm splendor and some exceptional fishing in the quaint East Cape!

Beach stretches out for miles from here and fishing is good in either direction. Just like back home, conditions and structure are what you are looking for here and there are many good places to fish along the playa. One of my favorites is Punta Arenas or the “Lighthouse” just north of the protected Cabo Pulmo Marine Park. Here you will find a wide variety of shallow water fish including grouper, jack, roosterfish and tuna. Just a short ways off shore the bottom drops to over two thousand feet. That means you have a shot at almost any fish you'll find at sea.



You can reach the Lighthouse by walking, kayaking, panga or riding a quad up the beach. Most resorts in the area can arrange your transportation. Fishing these areas is good all day but at it's very best in early morning and near sunset.

I sometimes forget how lucky we are that some of the very best surf fishing in the world is just two hours away in southern Baja. Take a little time to plan and contact the guides for this area before your next trip. If this is your first time fishing in the southern cape all the local experts will be happy to let you know where to find equipment, bait and where the fish are most likely to be biting. With just a little planning and a sense of adventure, you're guaranteed to be delighted with the journey and have the chance of a lifetime to catch a trophy fish!