



The ULTIMATE ATOLL

A SALTWATER UTOPIA FOR
THE ADVENTURESOME ANGLER

by Dylan Rose

*Dylan Rose tracks a GT that
was spotted from the boat.
Photo: Brian Gies*

The moment I set foot on Christmas Island my life was changed forever. My first visit was a metaphorical abstraction of the island's vibe, culture, warmth and relaxed pace. As I stepped off of the big Fiji Airways 737 onto the tarmac I noticed from behind the airport fence a small gathering of villagers quietly watching us deplane. Some of the island's sun-kissed, bronzed-faced children were standing behind the chain link fence, smiling and waving excitedly. I turned to look behind me expecting to see a familiar party waving back, but I soon realized their brilliant white smiles were actually for me and my intrepid gang of arriving fly anglers.

Of all the places I've traveled, the feeling of being truly welcome in a foreign land is the strongest at Christmas Island. It's the attribute about the place that connects me most to it. It's baffling to me how a locale so far away and different from anything I know can somehow still feel so much like home. From the giddy bouncing children swimming in the boat harbor to the villagers tending their chores; to the guides and their families, the lodge staff and even the boat drivers, they're all genuinely happy you're there. In a place where locals live day to day with so very little and merely surviving takes a concerted effort, it's a life changing experience to arrive here and feel the embrace of a community that truly wants nothing more than for you to have a great time and enjoy the island they call home.

Christmas Island is a strange and wondrous saltwater seascape that seems to have been infinitely blessed by the fishing gods. It is a vast matrix like network of endless hard sand flats, lagoons, channels and reefs spread out across the Earth's largest raised coral atoll. The main lagoon harbors the world's most expansive system of productive shallow water flats. Bonefish, trevally, trigger fish, sharks, snappers, puffers and milk fish patrol more than 100 named flats perfectly designed for wading fly anglers. Finned creatures of all shapes and sizes cruise a skinny water angler's ideal of a utopian flats world, looking for bite size morsels in the sand. Whether it's stalking the flats, trolling the blue water, teasing for reef dwelling giant trevally, plying "The Wreck" or hiking the back country, Christmas Island is a veritable wonderland for the saltwater fly angler.

WHERE IN THE WORLD?

Located approximately 1,400 miles due south of Hawaii and 144 miles north of the equator, the tiny coral dot of Kiritimati (pronounced kiri-si-mass as a Gilbertese respelling of the word Christmas) lies squarely in the middle of

the Pacific Ocean. Captain Cook landed on the island on Christmas Eve in 1777 and I can only imagine what a great holiday it might have been if he had packed an 8-weight and a few Gotchas.

Blasted by high altitude, British H-bomb testing in the late 1950s and again by the United States in the 1960s, Christmas Island and its magnificent population of seabirds got a front row view of the inception of the atomic age. Remarkably there were few, if any, ill effects on the island itself (the few villagers living on the island were evacuated and later returned to the island unharmed), as steady trade winds dispersed the radiation downwind. The island is essentially a harsh, salt infused landmass that lacks enough viable top soil and the nutrients needed for agriculture. The island's population is supported by a large cargo ship delivering commodities, food and supplies once every five weeks. The only natural resources available are essentially coconuts and fish and the country earns most of its revenue selling offshore fishing rights to Asian nations. The last census report estimates 5,000 plus people were inhabiting the nation of Kiribati's (pronounced kiri-bas) largest land mass.

A WORLD AWAY

Arriving at Christmas Island feels a little like someone determined the location of your trip by having a kid throw a dart at a map of the Pacific. Anglers pondering their first trip to the island frequently ask me about things such as rental cars, guided island tours, cell phone signals, wave runner rentals or shopping opportunities for wives and kids. I have to inwardly chuckle and the conversation usually turns quite quickly to a discussion of exactly how remote this place is. The island and its villages are essentially sub-Third World locale and it's important for first-timers to understand the reality of life in this far-away place. For the fishing outfitters and population on the island obtaining



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Left to right, top to bottom: Brian Gies cradles a monstrous giant trevally; an island youngster smiles for the camera; Anil Srivastava and guide T.J. with an incredible fly caught yellow fin tuna; Paul Imperia hoists a Paris flat beauty; head guide Biita works the endless flats; an outrigger boat at dusk. Photos: Dylan Rose, Brian Gies, Paul Imperia, Solomon Hutchinson

basic food items, supplies, equipment and tools is a massive challenge.

For many of the people that live on Christmas Island, their version of an insurance policy is a fattened pig tied to a palm tree by its hind leg. This real life rainy day fund is the best assurance they have to putting food on the table if the rice runs out, or the cargo ship cannot make it due to weather. Another stark example of life on Christmas Island a doctor client of ours recounted a story in which he visited the local “hospital” (a cinder block hut) to check it out and stood in amazement at the sight of intravenous tubes extending from a patient’s arm directly into a green coconut. For the locals, even basics like potable water can be hard to come by depending on rainfall amounts.

Ultimately, the lodges do the very best they can with what they’ve got, but when a spark plug breaks off in a motor block, the island runs out of sugar or a door handle snaps off, the closest hardware, grocery or auto supply store is an 1,800 mile away voyage across the wild Pacific Ocean in a slow moving cargo ship that departs every five weeks. If ever there was a destination where traveling anglers were required to go with the flow, Christmas Island is it. If you cannot wrap your brain around spending thousands of dollars to visit a place where you may on more than one occasion be required to smash a cockroach with a flip-flop, fall asleep to the click-clack sound of a hermit crab crawling across your room (or leg), or spend six days eating white bread and processed cheese sandwiches for lunch, then likely this is not the place for you. If by contrast you appreciate adventure, the skill and kindness of some of the most talented flats guides found anywhere, and the faraway beauty of a prolific saltwater environment; then a finer place is hard to find!

“SEPARATION IS IN THE PREPARATION”

It’s an adage right out of Super Bowl winning quarterback Russell Wilson’s playbook and it’s as true for a trip to Christmas Island as it is in football, “the separation is in the preparation!” Anglers that put in the time preparing their tackle, flies, casting skills and pay attention to the suggested packing lists flat out have more fun and catch more fish. More than just bringing

along the correct hardware, properly preparing has a lot to do with having the right expectations as well. Successful trips to Christmas Island have a lot to do with letting go of preconceived expectations and focusing on the ride rather than the result. That is to say, that generally speaking overpowering the guides with preconceived goals, forced desires to fish a particular flat or insisting on a set schedule generally yields poor results, not to mention unneeded stress. Instead, I see time and again that relaxing and letting the whole experience come to you in stride benefits you, your fishing partners and the guides as well. In the native Kiribati language, there is not a word for “no.” Anglers that arrive to the island with a hard charging sense of urgency and a desire to call the shots may insist on fishing a particular area or favorite flat.

Unfortunately, if some care is not taken to listen to the guides they may do exactly as you want and thus drop you on a completely high and dry flat void of any life. Guide’s simply have a hard time telling clients “no,” partly because they literally do not have a word for it, but also because they want nothing more than to simply make you happy. Without a doubt, anglers that can let go, listen to their guides and head to the island with a go with the flow mentality thrive.

Yes, properly preparing for Christmas Island trip (or any far reaching fishing trip) means spending a little time in the saddle with a rod in your hands before you go. Fly Water Travel’s representative Jon Covich used the analogy that you wouldn’t expect to visit golf’s holy land at St. Andrews in Scotland without hitting the range a few times, would you? The simple act of rigging your rod and sending out a few casts towards a hula hoop at 40 feet can immeasurably help your overall experience and do wonders for your hook-up ratio. The goal at Christmas Island is not to be able to launch your casts in to the stratosphere, but be able to deliver a fly quickly to targets at 40 feet in the wind with a minimum of false casts. Working on your casting mechanics and fine tuning your double haul is a wise expenditure of time before you hit the flats in order to maximize your opportunities and overall experience.



CHRISTMAS ISLAND
SPECIAL



Left to right, top to bottom: Legendary guide Moana Kofe; an endless expanse of fishable flats; Dylan Rose grips a Christmas Island thug; Ken Morrish steps on to the expansive oceanside flats; a male Frigate bird displays his pouch; Dylan Rose tames a Christmas Island drone. Photos: Phil Fischer, Ken Morrish, Brian Gies





A TARGET RICH ENVIRONMENT

There was a time in Christmas Island's history when literally everything alive (including bonefish and giant trevally) were on the local menu. From puffers to snapper, milkfish to sharks, if it swam or had fins, it was a food item. Thankfully in 2009, residents agreed to enforceable long-term regulations to protect bonefish from commercial harvest in the lagoon. Today we are seeing the benefits of this as well as an incredible array of additional species to throw a fly at. Bonefish and giant trevally are really just the tip of the iceberg. Black trevally, golden trevally, bluefin trevally, triggerfish, sweetlips snapper, wrasse, parrot fish, blacktip sharks and milkfish can all be targeted while wading. Together they can make for overheated drag systems and eye-popping catches of species you will not find readily available anywhere else. Additionally, the blue water is home to turbocharged species like wahoo, yellow fin tuna, mahi mahi and sailfish. It's a truly a target rich environment these days and when it all comes together, walking the flats can seem like a wade through a skinny water aquarium with fish scurrying around your knees in all directions. Often you may not know exactly what it is you're throwing at but it certainly will not stop you from trying!

THE MAIN ATTRACTION

Without a doubt, the main attractions on the flats of Christmas Island are bonefish. These metallic drone warriors set out across the flats in all directions scouring the coral and hard sand bottoms for crustaceans, shrimps, crabs and worms. Indeed the most special aspect of this fishery is that 100 percent of the fishing is accomplished on foot. There's nothing like stalking the flats in full predator mode and hunting them down with your rod at the ready. Whether it's your very first bonefish or your thousandth, it's always a thrill to present your fly to a hungry bonefish, watch him speed over to investigate, engulf

your offering, and zip out 100 feet of backing in a flash. Additionally, the beauty of the Christmas Island bonefish experience is that these scenarios unfold at close range. Rarely are you asked to make a cast longer than 40 feet. Moreover, the most experienced Christmas Island anglers catch fish all day long by gently walking the flats and laying out precision rolls casts of no more than 20 feet.

Guides often spot fish at 80 to 100 feet out and move you in a general direction to intercept. It's helpful to keep your eyes on the water close to you (40 feet and in) and let them worry about the distant fish. At the right moment and once they are in range you'll hear them whisper, "Two fish moving left to right, 10 o'clock, 40 feet. Land it softly and strip slow..." The first step is to get the fly gently down on the water without spooking the fish. Once the fly is down it's a good idea to give it a good long strip to make sure everything is straight and your leader is tight to the fly. After this step hopefully the fly is in a place where they will see it. If not, the fly is stripped to a point where the fish will intercept it or simply leave it in place while the fish approaches. Some of the guides will actually mimic the stripping motion with their hands, giving you a play-by-play description and also a visual cue for the right speed and length of the strip. Greedy bonefish often zoom over on the first or second pull to check out the prospects of an easy meal. Most times they'll eat your fly and be off to the races without question. Other times, they'll stop short and puff their fins out to the side like a curious Labrador trying to figure out where you've hidden its tennis ball. As they tip up on their noses, peering in to the sand to see what might be trying to get away your guide will help you tease them in to eating. At the exact right moment you'll hear him say, "Strip... Slow... Wait... Strip! Wait... You got him!" As your reel screams and the bonefish accelerates to 35 miles per hour, it's not uncommon to find yourself grinning with the sound of your heart still pounding in your ears.



“IT’S ALWAYS A THRILL TO PRESENT YOUR FLY TO A HUNGRY BONEFISH, WATCH HIM SPEED OVER TO INVESTIGATE, ENGULF YOUR OFFERING, AND ZIP OUT 100 FEET OF BACKING IN A FLASH.”









The 9-foot 8-weight fast action fly rod is the perfect tool to tame Christmas Island bonefish. Trade winds blow a consistent 8 to 15 mph on the island and while guides are experts at working you downwind, many slower or lighter line weight rods can prove difficult. High-quality tropical floating lines are required as are machined aluminum saltwater reels with stout drag systems. Ten to 12 foot long leaders tapered to 12 or 14 pound fluorocarbon is standard issue and provides a safe buffer between your fly and line.

The bonefish fly selection is pretty easy. Certainly, no one should make a trip without Christmas Island Specials. We prefer both the orange and pink versions. Gotchas and tan Clouser Minnows are also must-haves. The Chili Pepper is also highly effective as are many others. Stick with sizes between 4 and 8 and heavier flies are the norm. Dumbbell eyes as opposed to bead chain will help keep your flies on the sand and avoid being swept away and out of position by the current.

THE THUG AND THE TUG

Call them what you will. I've heard them affectionately referred to as thugs, marauders, maulers, brutes, beasts, bullies and worse. But irrespective of the name calling, hooking and landing a giant trevally is among the greatest accomplishments a saltwater fly angler can hope for. Furthermore, the Christmas Island populations of these incredible fish represent the largest, closest and most affordable opportunity for anglers traveling from the United States and Australia to tangle with a GT.

Few things will prepare you for the sight of a 60 pound giant trevally smashing mullet on a shallow flat with a full 12 inches of its back protruding from the water. Seeing them on the hunt is a sight that will be forever burned in to your fishing consciousness. It seems impossible that a fish so large and powerful can turn on a dime to chase baitfish in concentric circles at 30 plus miles per hour. To catch one while stalking the flats requires a mix of skill, perseverance and a lot of good luck. At times anglers with a bad GT habit will specifically hike the flats for a week or more, letting hundreds of bonefish pass them by, all for a once in a lifetime shot at hooking and

landing a true monster on foot. Similar to targeting permit, anglers that dedicate themselves solely to GT's stand the best chance at landing a big fish during a weeklong trip. It's hard to imagine bypassing all of the other various species that Christmas Island has to offer in the pursuit of one single magnificent fish. But for the select few that do make the commitment, the rewards can be amazing and the accomplishment can be well worth it.

Many veteran Christmas Island anglers choose a hybrid bonefish and giant trevally hunting approach that prepares them for opportunities with both species. This involves wading the flats with your bonefish rod in hand and a larger GT rod literally in your pocket. Anglers place the fighting butt of their 12 weight in the pocket of their flats pants and loosely position the rod vertically behind their off-hand shoulder; keeping it in place with a hip pack or slung pack strap. While walking the flats and targeting bonefish a keen eye is always kept on the edges of the flats and the margins between shallow and deep water zones for cruising giant, blue fin or black trevally. If a fish appears reachable, the 8 weight is literally thrown down on the flat and a mad dash is undertaken to get your GT rod out and your fly airborne. The idea is to do everything in your power and whatever it takes to get your fly on an intersecting course with the cruising GT. That may mean an all out sprint across a flat while flogging your 12 weight wildly in a 20 knot sustained wind. There are no style points here but with the right amount of luck, effort and skill you could either end up with one heck of a great story, or the landed fish of your dreams. Either way, it's an amazing experience just to have a shot.

Typical GT outfits are 11 and 12 weight rods with shooting head style tropical floating lines. These lines are meant to achieve distance with minimal of false casting. Many GT specific lines have reinforced cores and higher breaking strengths which is a big plus when dealing with these behemoths and the near constant protrusions of coral ready to slice your line in two. More importantly, the reel you choose is the biggest part of the gear puzzle for these fish. Adapted from techniques learned by the South Africans and their pursuit of GT's in the remote islands of the Indian Ocean, drag



settings are cranked to near maximum. With big GT's in the 50 to 80 pound range, it's imperative to keep them close and if a big GT even thinks for a moment that he can beat you, he probably will. A straight chunk of 7 to 9 feet of 80 to 100 pound fluorocarbon tied straight to the fly is considered the norm. Fish are fought with maximum pressure from the reel with a flat rod angle 100 percent of the time. These techniques keep constant pressure on the fish and even the most ardent big game fly anglers will be amazed at the speed with which these big GT's can be tamed in this way. Only the most well built fly reels are truly appropriate for this game.

It's amazing to think that fish as big and aggressive as the giant trevally could be selective when it comes to fly design. It's been proven time and again that these fish do not respond well to big flashy flies. In fact, quite the opposite is true. Flies should be basic, unweighted, non-flashy and synthetic to shed water quickly once in the air. Without a doubt our favorite pattern is the Brush Fly in both tan and black as this pattern meets all of the above criteria.

Teasing GT's from the reef with conventional tackle is another sporty way to target these fish and better one's odds of a hooking up. The technique is immensely entertaining and requires a team effort between a boatman, a guide tossing a conventional hookless plug and the fly angler casting at fish that chase the lure within range. Typically this is done near the outer reefs from a smaller center counsel style boat. The practice can make for a wavy, wild ride in which the trevally are often seen in full attack mode trying to get at the plug. If the plug is captured by the GT, the game is over. But if the teaser makes it all the way back to the boat unmolested by a GT, they often will swoop in for a bite of a well placed fly.

There's no doubt that chumming offers anglers the very best chance to hook and land a big GT. With success nearly a guarantee, some anglers have expressed consternation over the practice, as it remains the least attractive and least sporting of the methods employed. Accordingly chumming has received a good deal of negative press over the past several seasons. In

the same breath it is worth noting that the practice has been employed by guides on the island for more than 30 years. Christmas Island guides are accustomed to giving anglers the choice to target fish this way or to simply choose otherwise. Ultimately, the guides simply want their clients to have a great time and leave it up to each angler to decide for themselves how they will fish and define their sport.

THE CHRISTMAS CURE FOR THE BLUE WATER BLUES

Many ardent fly anglers recoil at the thought of fishing the blue water. Often the thought conjures images of hours upon hours of sucking in diesel fumes and feeling like your lunch is about to make its way overboard. In many parts of the world, fishing the blue water means expensive and long days in large boats requiring a big commitment of time and resources.

Christmas Island this is fortunately not the case. Anglers that agree to give it a try can fish the blue water for a half day very easily without additional charges in most cases. The edge of the island drops into deep blue water very close to shore. Wahoo, yellow fin tuna, mahi mahi, GT's, and even billfish can be caught within one or two miles of the beach. This means that on good weather days anglers can head out on the ocean for just a few hours and then return to fish the flats all in the same day.

The typical protocol is to rig your trevally rod with a trolling set up. The floating GT line is un-looped from your backing and a 30 foot length of heavy sinking line is loop-to-looped straight onto the backing. From the sinking portion a four foot section of super heavy monofilament (your 80 to 100 pound GT leader is appropriate) is knotted together and tied to an 80 pound barrel swivel to prevent twisting. From the swivel a two foot chunk of wire is attached and connected to a super flashy, large profile blue water fly. Drag systems are cranked, line is spooled out and your only job is to hold on!

The ocean surrounding Christmas Island is alive. It's not uncommon to see huge pods of spinner dolphin, booby birds, frigate birds, petrels, turtles



BRUSH FLY

and sharks. On a whole, the Christmas Island blue water experience is a fantastic diversion from the flats scene and even if fish are not cooperating, it's always memorable. Certainly, a 40 pound wahoo streaming line off of your fully cranked drag system at 60 miles per hour is something you will not soon forget.

THE KOREAN WRECK

Stretching some 60 miles along the northeast shoreline of the island is an area commonly referred to as the "Korean Wreck" or "The Wreck" for short. Anglers hoping to fish The Wreck must make a significant commitment as the drive can be several hours one way by truck and the tides can often limit your available fishing time. This expansive zone of colorful ocean side flats and channels are home to an incredible array of species. Most notably, anglers yearn to fish this area for larger than average ocean-going bonefish, enterprising giant trevally, numerous bluefin trevally, and milk fish as long as your leg. Here, bonefish are often targeted in the shallows while standing on the beach. Alternatively, some anglers prefer wading deeper and focusing on the coral margins between the flats and the breaking surf where a wide range of species can be found.

This remarkable stretch of the island is a pristine and truly wild place. In one moment you'll find yourself watching as a black tip shark desperately attempts to chase down a school of frenzied bonefish. The next moment you're throwing a fly at a 10 pound trigger fish and a minute later you're running down the beach at full speed to get a fly in front of a marauding GT that just surfed in on a wave to terrorize the flat. Your head may truly be on a swivel during a session at the Wreck!

ADVENTURE WITHIN THE ADVENTURE

The more one learns about Christmas Island, the more one begins to understand that it's impossible to see and do everything in a single trip. Walking the flats and throwing flies at bonefish is really just the tip of a huge ice-berg of potential experiences. We've had anglers take time out of their trips to

read to school children, visit churches with guides, or watch the super bowl on a satellite connected TV! More and more anglers are taking advantage of spending a night in the bush and camping out with the guides. Spending a night in the Christmas Island backcountry can yield unparalleled access to distant flats as well as opening up prime fishing time during the magic hours of dawn and dusk. With little more than a jug of water, a tent, an air mattress and a keen sense of adventure those ready for a once-in-a-lifetime experience now have the option see the island on its own terms.

For anglers looking for some of the most remote, expansive and physically demanding day of flats fishing, consider the incredible nine mile flat backcountry day trip. Accessible by either boat or by truck, guides will lead you on a four hour trek through some of the most productive and remote areas on the island. Anglers pack a lunch, extra water, and their fishing gear in a backpack and set off to meet the boat or truck at a prearranged distant location. Fishing and traversing your way from one flat to another, anglers maximize fishing time and see some of the most remote and beautiful portions of the interior lagoon on the island.

Still other fantastic diversions exist on a trip to Christmas. Whether it's hunting mantis shrimp, hand lining in the ocean with a rock and dead milkfish, or simply checking out Bird Island for a photo opportunity, there's a lifetime of incredible experiences just waiting to be had.

SIMPLE ACCOMMODATIONS AND SIMPLE PLEASURES

Without a doubt, accommodations on Christmas Island will always remain simple, rustic and very utilitarian. The very nature of the island is constantly seeking to destroy every non-natural thing that exists there. Including the island's various fishing lodges, villages and automobiles. Whether it is boats, motors, door knobs, insect screens, roofing or air conditioning units — the island's heat, wind, sand, salt and extreme UV intensity causes materials to rapidly break down over a very short period of time. Everything manmade on the island remains in various stages of decay. Even when things are "new" they are already prone to rust and decomposition. In the spring of 2015, three





new two story buildings were constructed at Christmas Island Outfitters complete with new mini-fridges, air conditioning units and new fans. Each building harbors four double angler units with private bathrooms and the new lodge was named Crystal Beach Lodge (formally Shark's Place) with the guide service remaining as Christmas Island Outfitters. Currently, staying in these new units is Christmas Island's equivalent of the Ritz Carlton, so it makes good sense to get to the island now as just like everything else on the island, it too will relent from the constant rigors of the environment.

Crystal Beach Lodge is located on the one of the most stunningly beautiful stretches of beach that we have ever seen. Its location right on the beach, about 10 minutes outside of London, on the ocean side of the island keeps mosquitos at bay and cool ocean breezes constantly freshen camp. There is simply no better way to fall asleep than with the tiredness of yet another brilliant day of fishing washing over you and closing your eyes to the sound of the mighty Pacific Ocean crashing down on the reef a couple hundred yards away from your bed. Although the new air conditioning units are nice to have, we strongly recommend shutting them off, opening your windows and letting your body acclimate to the island overnight. You'll have no trouble falling asleep with the cool breezes flowing through your room and your body with exert less energy when not constantly trying to adapt to the heat of the day and the cool of an air conditioned room.

Meals at the lodge remain pretty good overall considering the remoteness of the location. Coffee is on early in the morning and breakfast typically consists of simple eggs and bacon, a couple of pancakes, some bread and a little jam. Lunches remain very meager. We always recommend that anglers bring an assorted collection of salted nuts, jerky, energy bars and various snack items to supplement lunch. Having a few electrolyte powder packets to mix in to your water bottles while out on the flats also are a great idea. Dinners are usually very good and consist of a lot of fresh fish, rice, poultry and pork. Sometimes pasta is served or even barbecued steaks when the lodge can get their hands on fresh beef. It's a tradition in the evening before dinner to have sashimi and some of the freshest wahoo and tuna imaginable

is served every night and it's not uncommon to find yourself daydreaming of the sashimi smorgasbord while out on fishing each day. Overall, it's best to think of the meals and accommodations on the island as more of a fishing "glamping" adventure, rather than a luxurious fishing vacation.

WHAT'S ON YOUR BUCKET LIST?

Words frequently fail me when trying to describe Christmas Island to someone who has not been there. The sights, sounds, smells and intensely brilliant array of sea life radiating out in all directions simply has to be seen to be believed. This foreign land that has such a knack for welcoming its guests works hard to provide them with what we would consider "the basics." For anglers that can look past the grizzled exterior of the island's villages, do not mind "roughing it", and can embrace a go-with-the-flow attitude, this trip can be life changing. For those that feel compelled to visit a destination and come back with a long list of things that can be improved upon, save yourself the trouble and the paper. Christmas Island simply isn't for everyone. But for the right anglers seeking a true adventure, there are few places on Earth that can deliver on so many levels.

What truly affects many that visit the island and often keeps them coming back year after year is not the dining, accommodations, or even the remarkable fishery, but rather, it's the guides and people they meet along the way. For a population that lives with so very little and exists under the day to day strain of an uncertain future, they are among the most patient, happy and gentle souls you will ever meet. I speak with many clients that come back from the island having experienced the most incredible fishing of their lives, yet primarily focus on the magnificent time they spent with guides learning about their lives. Some have walked the sandy streets of make shift settlements becoming familiar with native construction techniques or attended church with their guides and families. Others have started rotary chapters, international aid organizations (Pacific Islands Medical Aid), campaigns to improve medical services and donated their time and expertise to medical missions. The people of Christmas Island affect many on a deeper

level and they are often inclined to get involved and find ways to help out.

Christmas Island is the one destination in the Fly Water Travel catalog that lands on just about everyone's bucket list. It's just one of those places that carries with it all of the romance, adventure and eye-popping catches that make up the saltwater destination of your dreams. Certainly this is true for those making their first trip but even the most well traveled, globe-trotting anglers fishing the most remote corners of the world's oceans

still sit around on faraway beaches and dreamily talk about Christmas Island like a long lost lover. Christmas is one of those places in the world that affects many to their core. Partly because of the incredible fishing, but also because of the special warmth of the people, the simple laid back vibe of the place, and the countless amazing sights and unique experiences that, if given the chance, will imprint on your soul forever.

NOTES

Getting There: Anglers headed to Christmas Island arrive in Honolulu on a Monday or before and overnight in Waikiki. The Fiji Airways flight departs Honolulu for Christmas Island at 12 p.m. Tuesday and arrives back from Christmas Island at 11 a.m. the following Tuesday. Anglers can usually connect home to a flight home the same day.

When to Go: Christmas Island is truly a year-round destination. Angler traffic from the states is heaviest during the winter and spring months but this has more to do with anglers looking to get away at this time than the fishing being especially productive. In the summer months Australians and Kiwis tend to dominate the flats and U.S. traffic reduces dramatically. Being that Christmas Island is equatorial, the destination offers some of the most consistent fishing weather found in the world for the December to March timeframe.

The various moon phases of the month have more to do with how the island sets up for your week than any other factor. Anglers

looking for a well balanced productive time to fish the flats or want to focus on bonefish should book during quarter moon cycles that provide neap cycle tides and long sweet spots of moderate water depth on the flats. Anglers looking for great opportunities for giant trevally and blue water species should look toward the full moon and new moon periods of the month. These times provide the greatest alignment of the earth, moon and sun and generate the biggest tide swings. Hybrid weeks with either a full or new moon towards the b

Essential Tackle: 8-weight rods for bonefish, 10 to 12-weight rods for giant trevally and other species. Weight forward floating tropical fly lines are the standard.

Top Flies: Christmas Island Specials, Brush Fly, Magnum Baitfish