

## Venezuela; Los Roques Report by Andy Smith, April 2016

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Out of all the fishing trips I've been on in recent years, Los Roques was the one I most looked forward to. Venezuela is a destination I had heard stories about for years, and it seems to have been a favourite destination of those in the know like the fly rod manufacturers and the tackle trade itself. Mention the words "Los Roques" in any good fly shop and just watch the smiles from the shop owners or their senior staff. I had regularly heard anglers say how fantastic the fishing had been in Cuba, but that they somehow still preferred Venezuela? So having already done trips to Cuba and the likes, I couldn't wait to cross this destination off my bucket list.



Situated just a short flight out from Caracas, this destination arguably has the finest bonefishing action to be had anywhere? Los Roques has been one of the world's top game fishing destinations for more than three decades and truly offers the most explosive bonefishing experience you can imagine. The location has everything on offer, tarpon, permit, horse-eyed jacks, triggerfish, snapper and big barracuda. However Los Roques is most famed for its hard fighting bonefish, which are such a thrill it's easy to forget the other species on offer whilst you are out there. "Toro" the guides joked to me, our "bonefish" they fight like bulls, and there were times in the week where I thought I had a bull on my line. I even had the gearing on one saltwater reel completely stripped out by a fish that wasn't stopping for anyone.



From the moment of landing on the main island of Grand Roques and on to what you could loosely call passport control, the whole experience was magical and totally stress free. It's a mere five minutes walk along sandy streets to the hotel and then less than two minutes to walk straight onto the beach, where your boat and guides are ready for the day.

There were eight of us fishing from the hotel, paired up in four boats. Not only did we not see each other during the day, other than an occasional lunch meet up, there was no one else fishing anywhere. This is fishing all to yourself with a horizon line that stretches out uninterrupted for miles.



The great attraction of Los Roques is its wealth of opportunity for wading and this is the ultimate challenge of stalking fish in crystal clear water. It is fair to point out that the predominance of wading, should not be put off for the less mobile amongst us as its very easy going and completely set to your pace and mobility. Fishing from the sandy beach shore lines off idyllic small islands, to strolling the “pancake flats” this is all about spotting fish, seeing the take and watching your reel spool empty at a rate of knots.

This is bonefishing in its purest form. The fishing really does suit all levels of expertise and whether you are a stillwater trout fisher in saltwater for the first time, through to someone with years of experience this destination thrills all. Again don't be put off at the thought of all that wading as the guides have many locations from where you can get out of the water and fish from the boat.



The pancake flats are the unique feature of Los Roques and offer both a fantastic fishing experience as well as a stunning landscape that will become one of your all time memories of any destination trip. The pancake flats are anything from the size of a tennis court to an area of several football pitches, and you are walking on white sand, grasses and coral shallows surrounded by deep blue drop offs. As a fishing area this is unreal as when the tide is right, fish come up from the deep water to feed through the flats and you can watch for their approach. Its heart stopping action as you cast ahead of them, stripping the fly as they are on top of it and see the action unfold before your eyes. Some might say it's the same excitement as seeing a trout take a dry fly? That maybe true, but the action out here is turbo charged.



For those already familiar with bonefishing, the flies used on the flats are light shrimp patterns and small Gotcha's, pretty much in line with Cuba and the Bahamas. What makes Los Roques unique are that the shore lines of all the islands are crowded out with millions upon millions of small minnows and here its all about predator activity with bonefish hitting fry patterns along the shallows as if it were their last meal and I'm not aware this happens anywhere else?



For those who just don't have enough fishing from 0800 until 1600 each day, there's plenty of action off the beach near to the hotel, that's before breakfast and ahead of the guides coming to collect you. I will admit that I was one of those out every morning at first light. Simply stunning action with bones, jacks, snapper and rainbow runners. The same can be said for evening fishing as well, but the welcome tray of cocktails that greet your return to the hotel at 1700 together with fantastic food, get the better of anyone as you relax and reflect on the day.



During the week we were there the weather was breezy to say the least, often dull and overcast, hardly the best conditions for saltwater fly fishing, yet myself and many of the group landed at least a hundred fish each. Imagine getting perfect conditions, it's just mental.

If you like the idea of this amazing location and want to join with a great team, I will be hosting another trip to Los Roques at the end of March 2017.

If you are interested in travelling to Los Roques or for more information contact **Peter McLeod** or **Alex Jardine**, or call our office on +44(0)1980 847389.