



OCEAN LIVING
FISHING
DIVING
SURFING
WHATEVER

LIVING THE **Life**
VILANO BEACH

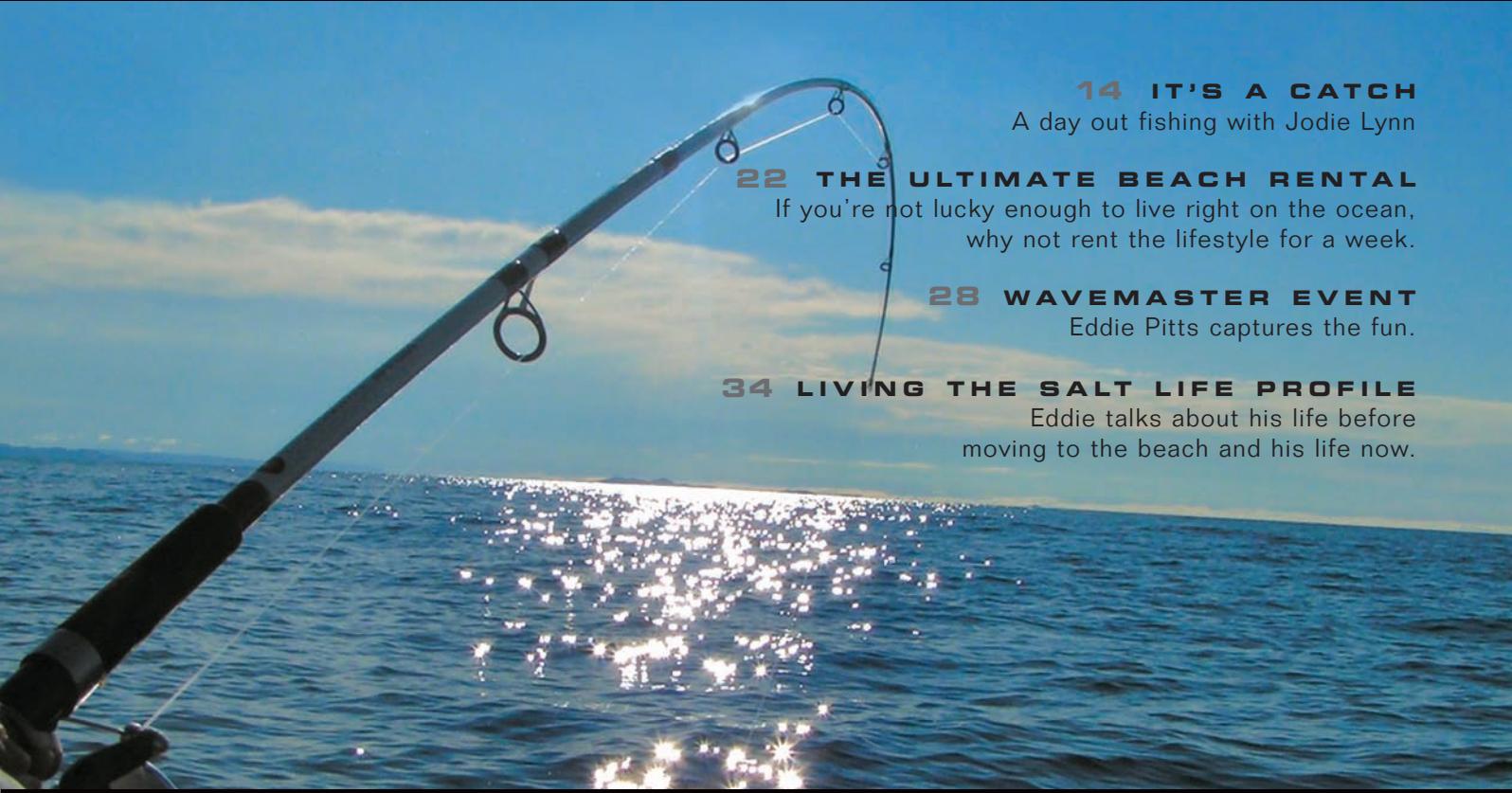
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It's
Catch



**A day out
fishing aboard
the Jodie Lynn II**

The Jodie Lynn II was scheduled to depart at six o'clock Sunday morning. The marine weather forecasts were predicting five and a half foot swells for most of the day, which apparently is enough to make a weak stomached person seasick. As Robert Johnson, captain of the Jodie Lynn II and owner of Jodie Lynn Charters (both of which were named after his wife), pulled away from the Conch House Marina, I got a little bit of time to meet my fellow fishermen for the day. It became obvious almost immediately that most of these guys were veteran fishers. There was only one customer there who had never been deep-sea fishing before. Two weeks prior, when I first heard Jodie Lynn's chipper voice ringing out of her answering machine, saying "Let's go fishing!" I had no idea how much fun I was in for. This was my first deep-sea fishing trip, so I was excited, a little nervous, and didn't know what to expect.



Josh handled the gaff like a pro, piercing the fish with one swift strike and dumping them into the ice chest on board.

Two hours after launch, we were 50 miles offshore. Despite the high swells, I caught a little shut-eye on the way out. As we made our trek toward deeper waters, Josh, the mate on board, was busy getting all of the rods and reels ready for trolling. I awoke just in time to see a 15-pound barracuda, the first catch of the day, being brought into the boat. The fish was released, and for the rest of the morning the deck was alive with activity and adrenaline.

Every time one of the nine lines we were trolling with got a bite, Josh was quick to grab the rod. He would set the reel, and then hand it off to the anxious hands of one of the customers. Everyone took turns reeling in their fish and it was part of Josh's job to help bait and cast each line after a fish had come in. Most of the fish were too heavy to lift over the side of the boat with just the rod, so a gaff had

to be used, which is simply a large hook on the end of a staff. As the larger fish were reeled close to one side of the boat, Josh handled the gaff like a pro, piercing the fish with one swift strike and dumping them into the ice chest on board.

We were also very fortunate because the large swells calmed early in the morning and we enjoyed very smooth waters for most of the day.

Robert found a weed line that stretched on for miles, so we followed that for quite some time. Weed lines are essentially long trails of seaweed floating on the surface of the ocean. They are formed where opposing ocean currents meet and are therefore indicative of a temperature change in the water. These weed lines also provide cover for bait fish, so you will generally find preda-

tory fish feeding along these golden brown paths. These predator fish were what we were out to catch.

One of the fishermen was talking about how lucky we were to find such a long, solid trail. No sooner had the words escaped his mouth, did we get a bite on one of the eight rods that had been baited and cast. Josh ran to the rod, set the reel, and handed it off, but before he even let go of that rod, we got another bite, then another, and then another. Josh was scurrying all over the boat, grabbing a rod just in time to practically throw it to a customer before diving for another rod. In a matter of seconds, all eight rods were in the hands of individuals frantically working to fight their fish up to the boat.

Caught in the excitement, and reeling in a fish of my own, I didn't even see the first mahi get



thrown into the ice chest...or the second...or the third. I did, however, see the fourth, fifth, and sixth mahi come in. As we were replacing our rods, one of the customers shouted, "And that's why we go fishing!" That seemed to be the attitude of everyone on board. We were all ready to do it again.

Almost every bite yielded a beautiful blue, green, and yellow mahi. Although we didn't experience another rush like that first one, we had about a dozen dolphins in the ice chest by eleven o'clock that morning.

As the bites slowed in frequency, almost everyone was helping themselves to lunch. One of the customers suggested we switch to bottom fishing. The captain approved the change and we set off for slightly more shallow waters.

banana on board. There are several possible sources of the "bananas-bring-bad-luck" theory. In centuries past, when sailors on transatlantic journeys stocked their holds with bananas from the tropics for their trip home, they stored them in large wooden crates. Sailors began to think that bananas were bad luck when they would often see tarantulas, snakes, and other vermin crawl out of those wooden crates housing the bananas. Another possible source is the idea that when bananas blacken, they give off a gas that can quickly rot surrounding fruit, leaving those transatlantic sailors nothing but minced meat and gruel to eat the rest of the way home.

While we were trolling, the farthest we reached was 60 miles offshore. Out there, the ocean floor was over 1,000 feet beneath us. While trolling, a fisherman's bait is skimming

When your line goes slack, you know you've hit bottom, so you set your reel and wait for a bite. ...you jerk your rod up hard and reel your catch all the way in.

AD

It was at this time that I learned a very important lesson: When you go out to sea, do not bring bananas. I brought my own lunch, which included a sub, an apple, and a banana. As soon as I pulled the banana out of my bag, I was met with an uproar of protest.

First I heard what I thought to be a strange question, "What have you got there?" asked one of the customers in an incredulous voice. That drew the attention of the others, who immediately began barraging me with complaints of bad luck and orders to throw my yellow fruit overboard. Of course, I thought they were kidding. They weren't. If for no other reason than to stop their banter, I decided to comply and threw my banana overboard.

Finally, Josh explained to me why his customers were so insistent that I not have a

the top of the water, which is generally where predatory fish would expect to find their prey along a weed line. To bottom fish, Robert took us to where we were just over 30 miles offshore, to parts of the ocean that were less than 200 feet deep. At this depth, you can drop a weighted line and let it hit the bottom. When your line goes slack, you know you've hit bottom, so you set your reel and wait for a bite. When you feel a bite, you jerk your rod up hard and reel your catch all the way in.

I mentioned that this was my first time deep sea fishing, so Josh was very kind and instructed me the whole way through. He had me catching red snappers left and right in no time. The smallest of those snappers, along with other small fish, were then used as live bait to catch bigger fish, such as grouper.

By the end of the day, we had more than a dozen mahi-mahis, plenty of snapper, half a dozen grouper, and a few other random fish, including a rainbow fish and a scorpion fish.

When the fishing was done, we all relaxed for an hour and a half on the way back to shore. The Jodie Lynn docked again at five o'clock that afternoon and while Robert cleaned the boat, Josh cleaned the fish. A large crowd of onlookers gathered as all of our fish were hauled to the cleaning tables. Other fishing boats were docking at the same time, so all of the fishermen were talking with one another and showing off their catches. A lot of people were posing for pictures with their fish so that they would have evidence to back up their fish stories.

If you have ever been deep sea fishing, you know how much fun I had. If you have not, I would encourage you to give it a try. Take a group of friends, hook up with a charter boat, and go out for a day. If you know some people already who enjoy fishing, have them come along with you.

Robert told me that most of his customers are return customers. "People that have been out with me before, they know what they're going to get," he said.

Jodie Lynn Charters actually has two boats, the Jodie Lynn and the Jodie Lynn II. The Jodie Lynn II is bigger and more expensive to charter, but whichever boat you go out on, you are going to get good fishing.

For those that are considering taking a deep sea fishing trip for the first time, there are a few things that you will want to bring. First of all, dress for the occasion. You will be out in the sun all day, you might get a little wet, and you will most likely get fish guts on your clothes. Second, did I just say you would be out in the sun all day? Bring sunscreen, but not Banana Boat or someone may throw it overboard. Also, bring your own lunch. Most charters will provide rods, reels, bait, tackle, ice, and just about anything else you need to fish, but you need to feed yourself and you can't cook your catch until you get home. Be sure you also have something to bring your fish home in. Bring a big cooler of ice

so that when the mate is finished cleaning your fish for you, you have somewhere to put them.

On a side note, if you are prone to get sick on planes or in cars, you will probably get sick on a boat, too. That doesn't mean you can't fish, it just means you may need to take some medicine if you don't want to spend the day hanging over the rail. Dramamine can be purchased over the counter, or for more effective results, your doctor can prescribe scopolamine patches. These should be taken prior to the activity that may cause motion sickness, so be sure to plan accordingly. Finally, you will need plenty of sleep the night before your trip—these charters leave early.

Make sure to ask plenty of questions when you book your charter. Children can have a lot of fun fishing, too. Just make sure that you know what your child can and can't do. Ask yourself how you want to spend your day—fishing, or helping your child fish?

And perhaps most importantly of all, don't bring any bananas!

WHAT'S IN THE COOLER

This will be a sidebar of things to pack in your cooler. And a picture of a cooler with all the stuff packed in it. NO BANANAS

