



deep sea adventures

by Alison Pearce



The man behind Bom Bom Island Resort, Chris Hellinger (right), notches up another Bom Bom sailfish. With him is American skipper Dave Zacha.

An angling paradise awaits you at

BOM BOM

APPROXIMATELY 300 kilometres off the coast of West Africa, in the Gulf of Guinea, are two little known islands which form the independent Republic of Sao Tome and Principe.

These islands, almost on the equator, are living proof that nature — given time and opportunity — can take back that which was wrested from her by man. They must be the closest thing to an unspoiled paradise, covered in luxurious tropical growth and surrounded by clear equatorial waters,

and perhaps one of the last remaining virgin gamefishing grounds worldwide.

For centuries, the local Creoles have relied on the warm tropical waters as a major source of protein, and it is not uncommon for huge sailfish to be caught on a simple handline from rough, hand-hewn log canoes.

Observing this, German entrepreneur Chris Hellinger — a keen angler himself — made an exploratory trip to test the waters and in so doing discovered an untapped fisherman's dream.

In an effort to assist the islands' embryonic tourist industry, Chris has built an exclusive fishing resort on the tip of the smaller of the two islands, Principe.

Bom Bom Island Resort, named after a minute islet at the site, is truly amazing. Hellinger is responsible for the design and layout which boasts a novel 200 metre wooden bridge or walkway that connects the Bom Bom islet to the main

resort. On Bom Bom is the restaurant, complete with international chefs, a Bali-like lounge and bar, and a mini-casino.

Twenty-five airconditioned chalets,

The exclusive island resort — on the northern coast of Principe — has 25 top-class airconditioned bungalows, each with a bedroom, sitting room and en suite bathroom.



Bom Bom Island Resort Fishing Tournaments



BOM BOM ISLAND RESORT FISHING TOURNAMENT

It's a whole new ocean and a whole new fishing game - Bom Bom Island Resort is situated on the tiny Island of Principe in the Gulf of Guinea. This untouched paradise which lies just north of the equator and 320 Km off the West Coast of Africa is the game fishermen's dream come true. The resort will be holding four fishing tournaments over the next three months offering anglers an unforgettable experience.

TOURNAMENT DATES

- 1 October - 4 October 1992 (4 days) Bottom Fishing Tournament US \$3 000,00
- 29 October - 1 November 1992 (4 days) Pelagic / Tuna Fishing Tournament US \$3 000,00
- 10 December - 13 December 1992 (4 days) Bill Fish Tournament US \$3 500,00
- 31 December 1992 - 3 January 1993 (4 days) International Billfish Shootout US \$3 500,00

The above rates include five (5) nights accommodation per person sharing on Bom Bom Island Resort, all meals, all beverages - both alcoholic and non-alcoholic, four (4) days fishing aboard our fully equipped game fishing boats, transfer from São Tomé to Bom Bom Island Resort - return, and Gala Dinner / prize giving on the last night of the tournament. Excludes airfares to and from São Tomé.

For further information and reservations contact :-

South Africa

Equator Travel (Pty) Ltd
Tel (011) 394 2691 or
Fax (011) 975 5506

USA

Sporting International, Inc.
Tel (800) 231 6352 (toll free)
or (713) 744 5222.





Alison Pearce with her world record 17kg cubera snapper caught off Bom Bom.

all with satellite television, are scattered in sweeping curves along the fabulous coconut-palmed beaches on the mainland.

Access to the resort is by Unimog via an earth road from the airstrip — a hair-raising trip in itself. International visitors transfer from Libraville in Gabon in West Africa in the resort's private Gulfstream, clearing customs on Sao Tome and then onto Principe.

Bom Bom Resort owns four fully-equipped strike craft which consist of two American Blackfins of ten and nine metres, a nine metre American Bertram and an eleven metre South African T-Craft, as well as a reserve seven metre Acecat. There are no other strike craft on the entire island.

Knowing the waters to be untested, Chris Hellinger first called on the services of ace Miami, Florida, fishmaster, Mark "The Shark" Quartain, in December 1991, to fully investigate the fishing potential, with a return trip in May 1992, prior to opening the resort in August this year.

As no-one, as far as Chris knew, had ever fished these waters with modern tackle, there was no information available to Mark and he literally had to research the waters from scratch. *Before even dropping a line, he studied maps illustrating the elevation of the seabed platform formed by centuries-old volcanic action.*

He then spoke to some of the local Creole fishermen about their general catch and marvelled at the skill and bravery of these islanders. Their traditional Santomean boat, called a "dongo", is essentially a canoe made from a single hardwood tree trunk, the average length being 15 to 20 feet.

They fish with both handline and net, and even have provision for a live bait well in the bottom of the canoe.

Their catch seemed to be mainly barracuda, bonito, wahoo and sailfish, and they appeared to fish the same region all year round. Surmising that the marine life did not migrate, as the food chain appeared undisturbed, Mark set out to catch for himself.

And catch he did!

Within a few days, Mark-the-Shark was able to say unequivocally that he

rated the Bom Bom Island Resort waters "a ten, as far as sailfish are concerned."

A short while later, Mark's findings were backed up when a small group of fishing enthusiasts flew in to test the sportfishing potential of the area. During the couple of days that the four teams fished in the mini "virgin" tournament, they boated 43 sailfish and one marlin, along with many wahoo, barracuda and other gamefish.

The average weight of the sailfish was around 46 to 54 kilograms, and the blue marlin weighed in at 200kg. Not bad going for a couple of days' fishing in uncharted waters, with skippers literally groping in the dark, only able to go on the speculations of Mark-the-Shark.

On a subsequent trip in May 1992, world fishing records were shattered. This included two women's records for cubera snappers (of 17kg and 10kg), both by inexperienced anglers and both skippered by Mark-the-Shark.

Further investigation has led to Mark discovering many superb gamefishing grounds within easy reach of the resort, giving rise to him stating that, in his opinion, "There definitely are world record fish here — this could be the last place in the world to find them."

Bom Bom Island Resort in the warm waters of the Gulf of Guinea, will shortly be known as having a respected place on the world gamefishing circuit.

In line with the opening of the Bom Bom Island Resort, there are four fishing tournaments scheduled for the rest of this year: the first Bom Bom Island Resort Bottom Fishing Tournament, from 1st to 4th October; the Pelagic/Tuna Fishing Tournament, from 29th October to 1st November; the Billfish Tournament, from 10th to 13th December; and the International Billfish Shootout from 31st December to 3rd January 1993 — what a way to spend New Year!

For further information, contact Equator Travel in Johannesburg (011) 394-2691, fax (011) 975-5506, or Sporting International, Inc., in the United States, (800) 231-6352 (toll free USA) or (713) 744-5222. ⚓

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