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Q&A: John Donovan; RedRum Sportfishing

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San Marcos resident John Donovan planned to retire as a partner in a medical financing business when it was taken over by Capital One in 2003. But on a fishing trip to Cabo San Lucas, he decided to take over RedRum Sportfishing, which had been operating at the Mexican resort since 1999 with one boat.

Since then, Donovan, 57, in partnership with his son, Ryan, 28, has expanded the fleet to four boats. A fifth boat is going through a complete rebuild, and a 54-foot luxury sport-fishing boat is being added in November.

We talked to John Donovan about the company.

How does sport fishing off Cabo differ from sport fishing off San Diego?

Cabo is one of the richest fishing grounds in the world. Proclaimed by many as "the Marlin Capital of the World," Cabo offers wonderful fishing 365 days a year, whereas in San Diego, the offshore season is much shorter.

In Cabo, you have the opportunity to find big game fish as close to one mile offshore, opposed to as much as 100 miles off the coast of San Diego. The cost of chartering one of our boats in Cabo also is significantly less than a charter in California.

What are your biggest challenges and advantages to operating in Mexico?

The main challenge is the differences in cultures. The slower pace of life in Cabo takes getting used to.

One of the biggest advantages is the abundance of fish. Another advantage is that Cabo is a tourist destination. Nearly 90 percent of our clientele are on vacation and usually are in a great mood with a very positive frame of mind upon entering our office every morning.

What do you catch down there? How big are they? Are there limits to how much you can catch?

Since our fishing season is year-round, certain species are more plentiful at certain times. We catch about 16 species from our inshore fish, including snapper, roosterfish, sierra, yellowtail and grouper. Our offshore is a combination of dorado, marlin (blue, black and striped), yellowfin tuna, swordfish, wahoo, shark and sailfish.

The bigger marlin is in the 500-to 700-pound range, and the big tuna can be as big as 300 pounds. There is a four-fish-per-person limit.

Do you offer all provisions, including gear and food for the fishermen?



Our charters are all-inclusive, with the exception of the fishing license required by the government of Mexico, which is mandatory for all anglers over the age of 12.

Do you clean the fish?

Yes. We clean, fillet, package and freeze the fish for our clients.

Are you an avid sports fisherman yourself?

I have been fishing the waters of Cabo since the early 1980s. My son and business partner, Ryan, joined me on my fishing trips 10 years ago. We love fishing and we have fished together all over North America and Central America, from California to Massachusetts.

– *DIANE LINDQUIST*

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