



Keith Potter was one of the group of anglers who thoroughly enjoyed their stay at Turtle Bay Camp.

fish, rockhind, hogfish, snappers, coral rockcod, tomato seabass and many others were there for the taking. Some of the smaller specimens were put back down near the bottom on heavier gear, only to be grabbed and the trace bitten through by much larger predators.

At this point I decided to give my vertical jigging outfit an airing with a 250g Williamson Benthos Speed butterfly jig and single assist hook, tied to a 12ft 100 lb mono rubbing leader (to withstand abrasion against the rocks). This was joined to the 80 lb braid line with an Albright knot. A fast retrieve (6.2:1) Torium 30 reel completed the outfit, and down to the bottom went the jig in over 200 feet of water. After touching down — surprisingly quickly in such depths, but that's the beauty of butterfly jigs — I repeatedly worked that bottom 50 feet of water, and was rewarded with a large squirrelfish, a little bigger than the jig, on only the second drop.

A couple of minutes later I felt a savage bang on the rod tip, followed by a feeling of weightlessness. Yes, the 100 lb rubbing leader tied to the solid ring on the hook link had been bitten through — possibly a barracuda, shark or a wahoo.

So I incorporated a 20-inch, 100 lb test wire trace between jig and rubbing leader to alleviate this happening again, which I'm pleased to say did not. But immediately afterwards I did have a huge fish rip over 40 yards of braid from the reel (the clutch wound up so hard I could not pull line off) as it dived for the bottom before slipping the hook.

Boy, was I gutted, because the unseen monster, with its power-diving and head-shaking suggested a big GT, one of the very species we had come to catch.

Only a few minutes later, however, just up from the bottom in 220 feet of water, over went the rod again as line peeled from the reel. But this fight was entirely different and easily controllable, and following a great arm-wrenching snap, up through the clear water

depths came a stunningly coloured rockcod of around 30 lb. This was followed (also from depths in excess of 200 feet) by another rockcod of almost twice the size, which for the first couple of minutes power-dived so hard that I thought I was going to be pulled over the side. What incredible, gut busting fishing.

We had travelled to Kalakajour expecting to tempt GTs using large surface poppers. We spent a couple of days to this end working the upper water layers beside tropical islands in depths between 12 and 30 feet without so much as a single hit. The sea here is so crystal-clear — the bottom can clearly be seen in depths down to over 30 feet — we would have seen groups of GT's had they been present. Our guide and skipper of *Pinch of Salt*, a professional Cape tuna boat sporting twin 225 outboards, said as they were not inshore, trolling further out over reefs in depths of between 40 and 75 feet, would produce. And he was spot on.

Actually, just about everything was situated further out than expected following a spate of tropical storms, which could well have affected baitfish distribution, and by trolling CD14 and 18 Rapalas at around six knots, we instigated action not only from barracudas to over 20 lb, but big reef snappers, bonito, skipjack tuna and Spanish mackerel averaging around 10 lb apiece, with the occasional larger king mackerel thrown in for good measure.

We then eventually attracted the much sought after trevallies. We caught the beautifully-painted bluespot or bluefinned trevally, averaging around 6-10 lb, and then came the mighty, deep bodied, silver-sided, incredibly strong-jawed GT. They gave us what we'd come for — head-shaking fights with truly astounding power, whilst continually diving deep throughout long battles.

Even on 20 lb trolling outfits, these big GTs would simply rip line off at will, regardless of a firmly-set clutch. Small wonder most tropical sportfisherman rate this species at the very top of

their hit list behind marlin and sailfish.

Favourite plug colours proved to be white with orange stripes and blue mackerel. These outfished all else by far, which in seas that do not see many sportfisherman you would not expect.

But the difference was most noticeable, to the extent that Keith Potter's CD14 white and orange plug accounted for over half of the hits one afternoon, despite three other colour combinations being trolled alongside it. And this is the beauty of blue water trolling. You constantly need to be experimenting and trying lures of varying colours and different diving actions. Even from hour-to-hour, let alone from day-to-day.

Following an opening account with a long 20 lb-plus toothy barracuda, Keith's plug could not have been back in the water for more than a few minutes before his reel was screaming again, and this time to a sizeable GT of around 25-30 lb. What a marvelous fight it put up, as did all the trevally we caught. But the largest specimen, a whopper of around 40 lb, fell to the rod of Mark Bliss.

This was a fish which at some time during the battle got chomped by a shark or wahoo (there was a nasty, fresh scar on its flank to prove it), but still managed to scream line out on several breathtaking runs before Mark was able to bring it alongside so I could grab its thick tail root and hoist it on board for a trophy shot. You do need to wear a chain-mail glove when doing this, due to the razor sharp chutes along its bevelled tail root which could easily cut the palm of your hand to shreds.

With a 20 lb-plus king mackerel to the rod of Pete Cook following Mark's GT, the action on this particular afternoon was nothing short of spectacular. And, yes, no doubt we will be back.

This kind of action is not only contagious, it's simply magical. 

**Turtle Bay Camp is managed by Jenman Island Safaris, contactable on (021) 683 7826, or e-mail <info@jenmansafaris.com>, website <www.travel2madagascar.com>.**