



# Putting out to sea

From nodding off on the shore and sunbathing on boats to kayaking on shifty waters, the UAE offers fishing adventures to suit every taste, says amateur fisherperson **Cheryl Robertson**

**T**he mesmerising bobbing of a fishing float on water can play tricks on the eyes. As you stare at it, willing it to dip into the depths with a fish gripping onto the hook, it does just that — vanishes. When you frantically yank at the rod and there's no resistance, you realise you've been fooled yet again.

Patience is key when it comes to fishing. A little concentration wouldn't go amiss either. I admit to being an amateur with a drifting mind who knows little about my prey, its habitat and how to be versatile when fishing. I'd like to learn more, however, for I've recently discovered a whole new world thriving out there in UAE seas.

There's game fishing from a boat or luxury yacht, sports fishing, competitive fishing and fishing from a kayak to consider. While the Environment Agency-Abu Dhabi (EAD) has

introduced regulations to protect fish stocks, it is also important for fishermen to use sensible practices — to tag and release, to let go small specimens so that they have time to grow, and to be aware of each species' breeding season.

Ivan Kraemer of the Leading Edge, a sports and leisure company, says that fish stocks in the Arabian Gulf have diminished over the 13 years he has been in the UAE, but these waters still offer great fishing opportunities. "Catch and release is the only way forward to sustain the sport here, and I would really like to show people how this can be done," he says.

The EAD issues licences and permits for commercial, recreational and traditional fishing. The bottom line is that private individuals can fish provided they obtain a licence online (<https://eservices.ead.ae>). An annual



Pictures: Supplied

**HOOKED ON:** The writer (above) says patience and concentration are essential to enjoy fishing



recreational fishing licence costs Dh120 a year and a weekly one costs Dh30.

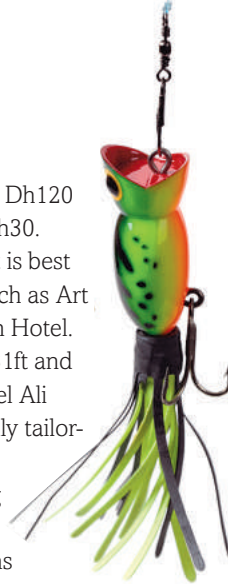
For game fishing in comfort, it is best to go with a licensed operator such as Art Marine, based in Jumeirah Beach Hotel. It has a fleet of yachts between 31ft and 101ft for private charter. The Jebel Ali Golf Resort & Spa also offers daily tailor-made deep-sea fishing charters.

Ocean Active, a sports fishing company, offers charter boats with qualified guides and captains who assist fishermen of any level to catch a trophy. Its owners offer free advice from their speciality fishing shop based in the Dubai Garden Centre on Shaikh Zayed Road.

“We like to focus on beginner or intermediate anglers in need of instruction and advice,” says Nick Bowles, Managing Director, Ocean Active. “The concept is to establish a community here at our offices. People come to browse, have coffee, look at our products, talk about fishing, and seek advice. And we are there for them,” he says. “We also help those who [have bought] a boat, yet don’t know how to operate it properly.”

The company promotes sustainable fishing practices. “We do tag and release — our international clients would refuse to do anything else,” says Bowles. Despite negative perceptions of the Arabian Gulf being devoid of fish he says that the man-made islands have now created a huge habitat for fingerlings and consequently other predators follow.

The three du Plessis brothers of Soolyman



Sport Fishing, which operates from Umm Suqeim Fishing Village in Jumeirah and the east coast of Fujairah, grew up fishing, have a passion for it and know everything there is to know about game fishing in the UAE.

Their fishing grounds vary from 30 to 60 kilometres into the Arabian Gulf on private wrecks and artificial reefs, depending on the time of year or season or even species targeted. All are hard-fighting fish such as barracuda, king mackerel, cobia, queenfish, bonito, grouper and various species of trevally.

“Off the coast of Dubai, we have caught game fish of up to 40 kilogrammes, but off the Fujairah coast you are talking about big sailfish and yellowtail tuna. Our biggest has been a 150kg-plus blue marlin,” says Bobby du Plessis.

Then there is kayak fishing, an extreme sport, not for rookies. “Kayak fishing offers a greater amount of adventure and skill based on the higher risk involved. So adrenalin junkies love it,” says Kraemer. However, it can be very dangerous if not done under the guidance of experienced people. Mangrove fishing from kayaks is a more sensible option for newcomers; plenty of fish lurk in shallow waters.

Shoreline or surf fishing is popular anywhere along the UAE coast where barracuda is plentiful. Another spot to consider is along the Dubai Creek.

Don’t know about you, but for the next few days I’ve gone fishing.

— Special to GN Focus

PRIZE CATCH: Sailfish tagged and released by Team Soolyman, off the coast of Fujairah. From left to right: Kelvin du Plessis, Darren du Plessis and Mike Setterburg

## Fishing charters and lessons across the UAE

**Ocean Active:** Dubai Garden Centre, Shaikh Zayed Road, Dubai

**Website:** [www.oceanactive.com](http://www.oceanactive.com)

**On offer:** Customised charters in Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Fujairah, Musandam and Muscat. Trips to destinations in the Middle East, Indian Ocean and Africa. Lessons available

**Requirements:** Passion for fishing

**Soolyman Sport Fishing:** Dubai and Fujairah

**Website:** [www.soolymansportfishing.com](http://www.soolymansportfishing.com)

**On offer:** Four- to eight-hour private fishing trip for up to seven people.

Lessons for all ages conducted at sea upon booking a fishing trip

**Requirements:** Identification

**Leading Edge:** Operating in Umm Al Quwain and Ras Al Khaimah (Al Hamra Village)

**Website:** [www.leadingedge-s.com](http://www.leadingedge-s.com)

**On offer:** Four-hour sessions of boat and kayak fishing, group and private. Deep-sea fishing by boat and kayak for advanced fishermen. Lagoon and mangrove fishing from kayaks

**Requirements:** A minimum of 16 years of age

**Art Marine:** Jumeirah Beach Hotel

**Website:** [www.artmarine.net](http://www.artmarine.net)

**On offer:** A fleet of yachts between 31ft to 101ft available for charter. Lessons available on-board for all ages and abilities

**Arabian Divers & Sportfishing Charters:** Abu Dhabi

**Website:** <http://fishabudhabi.com/new/>

**On offer:** Big game sportfishing, onshore/offshore, private charters, half or full day, five anglers per boat in Abu Dhabi and Fujairah

— C.R.