

THE CABO BLANCO REGATTA

Most people have heard about Cabo Blanco. This is a unique place on the northern coast of Peru where the best sports fishing grounds for black marlin developed decades ago. The Cabo Blanco beaches are a surfing paradise where from time to time, the perfect wave is formed.

Few people know however that Cabo Blanco was worldwide known especially for famous anglers that came from many places of the world to fish here. Something amazing happened at that time that will hardly be repeated again. During the 1950s, the largest fish ever caught with a rod were captured in Cabo Blanco, a feat of man and the sea. This legendary time from sport fishing has never been seen again in any place in the world. Several world records of fish caught at that time period have not been surpassed until now.



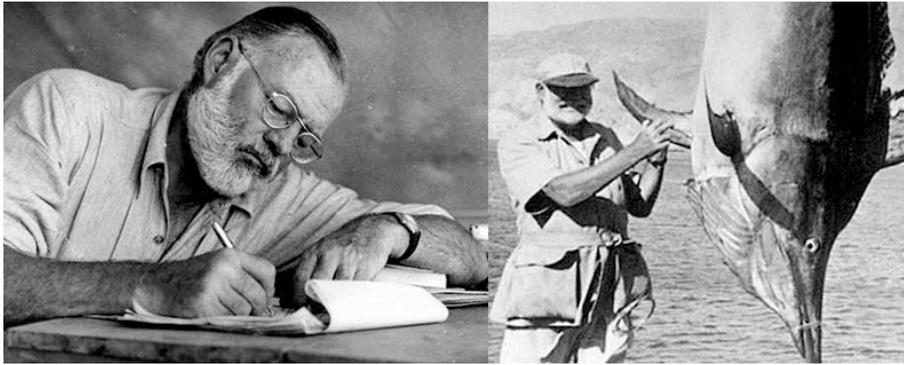
The importance of what happened at that time in Cabo Blanco was so relevant that the International Fishing Museum in Florida (IGFA Museum) welcomes all its visitors showing the Cabo Blanco section as their first and main attraction. In this small fishing town of our coast on August 4th, 1953 Mr. Alfred Glassell became the world champion of sport fishing, capturing a black marlin of 1,560 pounds (just over 700 kilos) a record that still holds today.

In addition to this unique fishing ground, Cabo Blanco is also one of those places where nature and man have decided to do something special. In this beautiful fishing town cradled at the foot of a cliff 300 meters high and bathed by a blue sea like few others, several tens of artisanal fishing sailboats sway in the wind every day. They are a unique remnant of a long pre Hispanic tradition of this part of the world's oceans: the traditional art of fishing in sailboats.

The amazing thing about this tradition (practiced by nearly one hundred artisanal fishing boats from Cabo Blanco and other neighboring fishing towns like El Ñuro, Los Órganos, Lobitos, Talara, and Negritos) is that every year they gather to compete in a sail regatta. This colorful and traditional regatta is celebrated together with the religious tradition of honoring their patron Saint Peter on June 29th every year (called Fishermen's Day). The regatta is a show of art and technique where all boats and fishermen compete solely driven by the strength of the wind. Art because they paint their sails and boats to compete also for a prize for the best decorated boat.

The traditional sail fishing is a skillful activity carried out at high speed (3 to 6 knots) dragging several lines with bates of small plastic squids that allow them to catch huge fish like tuna, barracudas and other oceanic species that often exceed 100 kilos. The amazing skill of these fishermen inherited from their parents and grandparents, allows them to capture these magnificent prey using nothing more than their hands and their knowledge of the local winds and ocean currents.

One of the famous visitors to Cabo Blanco was Ernest Hemingway (Nobel Prize for Literature) whose novel "The man and the sea" was partly inspired in the formidable skill of the fishermen of Cabo Blanco and their sailboats, whom he observed day after day during his stay at these beaches. The fishing scenes from the film of the same name as the famous novel were also filmed in Cabo Blanco.



However, the art of sailing of these artisanal fishermen is being seriously threatened by the industrial fishing due to the presence of motorized trawlers and their large fishing nets. Many of them fish illegally within the 5-mile exclusion zone for artisanal fisheries severely impacting the fragile bottom ecosystems that sustain these rich fishing grounds.

This event is called the "Centennial Regatta" ("Regata del Siglo" in Spanish) in commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the foundation of Cabo Blanco (1916). This time will be the 4th event that is now an annual tradition in this area. The purpose of this activity is to strengthen the traditional sailing and fishing techniques that have been transmitted for generations. This is a sustainable, selective technique that has to be preserved as a cultural heritage and as an environmentally friendly fishing practice.

Thus, last year the Ministry of Culture declared this tradition as a National Cultural Heritage. The Declaration recognizes: "The Knowledge and Practices associated with Sailing and Traditional Fishing in Artisanal Sailing Boats in the Cabo Blanco and El Ñuro fishing towns", (Vice-Ministerial Resolution No. 117-2018-VMPCIC-MC). These are precisely the sailboats that will participate in the traditional Centennial Regatta this year.

This ancestral sailing tradition is inherited from the old Tallanes Indigenous people whose descendants lived in the Sechura region and later founded Cabo Blanco at the beginning of the XX century. The celebrations of this tradition is important to strengthen the identity of these communities as heirs of this ancestral fishing practice so that it is preserved in time despite the introduction of new, more profitable, but less sustainable fishing practices.

But there is a reason for the presence of the rich fishing grounds of Cabo Blanco. This is the place where the cold Humboldt Current flowing from the south meets the northern warm Tropical current. The confluence of these large currents generates an ocean front that is a unique and rich marine ecosystem. This is a place where marine species thrive. Gigantic whales, sharks, dolphins, manta rays and turtles all share this rich ocean area with the famous and elusive black marlin.

This area belongs to the so called Peruvian Tropical Pacific Ocean and was selected in 2017 in the category of HOPESPOTS or PLACES OF HOPE on the planet. This initiative was promoted by the world-renowned oceanographer and ocean explorer Sylvia Earle and her institution Mission Blue, one of the most prestigious and influential marine conservation organizations in the world.

This "Places of Hope" are designated as such because they gather a series of important and unique features that will serve to protect the last zones of great biological importance of the oceans. Therefore, conservation actions in these areas are of special urgency and importance.

This year the Regatta of the Century will carry the motto: PERUVIAN FISHING SAILBOATS: NATIONAL CULTURAL HERITAGE in order to promote the recognition of this tradition by the Ministry of Culture. Approximately 40 boats from the fishing towns of Cabo Blanco, Ñuro, Cancas, Lobitos, Talara, among others will participate in this regatta.



Today this colorful activity has become a tourist attraction. The fishermen of Cabo Blanco have decided to show the world their proud sailboats and their proverbial navigation skills.

This coming June 29 the regatta will be to celebrate the Fishermen's Day honoring the Declaration of this sailing boats as a National Heritage. There will be an exhibition of sailboats and barges never seen before. The event will include many activities sponsored by local businesses and NGOs. You are invited to celebrate this special and colorful event in Cabo Blanco.

This year the Regatta of the Century is organized by the Artisanal Fishermen's Association of Cabo Blanco with the coordination and support of the NGO H2Oceanos. It will be possible thanks to the important sponsorship of the Walton Family Foundation, H2Oceanos, Stefano Camaiora, FISA, San Jacinto, Inkaterra Association, and RPP Group.

Other government agencies that support this activity are: The Peruvian Navy Coast Guard (DICAPI), the local Piura Office of the Ministry of Culture, PromPerú, the National Program of A Comer Pescado, the Municipality of El Alto, and the Ministry of the Environment, among others.

Note: Cabo Blanco is located in the Piura Region. There are daily flights from Lima to Talara (one hour and a half flight). Cabo Blanco is 43 km south of Talara. Taxi and Vans depart from the Talara airport frequently (one hour ride).