

# HEADING SOUTH

## ADVENTURE IN MAIO

Text: Martijn Dekkers. Photos: Martijn Dekkers and friends

In search of adventure, Martijn Dekkers and his friends head to the North of Norway every year. Their own boat, their own plans, figuring everything out for themselves and being rewarded with beautiful fish: it doesn't get any better. However, last year, this group changed course. This time, their compass pointed south: a different continent, different styles of fishing, different species of fish and different weather conditions. Their destination: Maio, Cape Verde. Maio turns out to be a true fishing paradise... An island that has everything to make anglers happy. Martijn relives that trip in this article...



An island that has everything to make anglers happy.

Maio turns out to be a true fishing paradise...





own rods. We used the spinning rod from the shore and the jigging rod from the boat.

Foto 10 On Maio, you never know what you will catch! During the day, we often went searching the beaches – and it's amazing what you can find!

### DAILY SCHEDULE

We decided in advance to fish in two groups of three people, who would take turns fishing from the shore and from the boat. This way, everyone would fish three times from the shore and three times from the boat. We also changed the composition of the groups regularly so that we would all have fished together at least once, which is more fun, of course. Every day at 8 o'clock we enjoy a delicious breakfast. Delicious rolls, fried eggs, cheese, ham, but also apples, pears and delicious dragon fruit, we almost fight over the last piece. The juices and coffee make the breakfast more than complete. After breakfast, the paths of the shore and boat anglers separate. The boat anglers leave immediately for the harbour, while the shore anglers have to wait longer before they can start fishing. They mainly fish during the dark hours. Do they lie on a

Lean and mean.

### SEA FISHING

From Amsterdam, we fly to Lisbon and then continue on to the island of Praia. There, we spend the night in a nice hotel, and after breakfast, we are picked up by Michael, owner of the Maio Fishing Club with his boat. Hoping to encounter a marlin or other large fish species, we troll our way towards Maio. Unfortunately, there were no bites, but it was certainly a beautiful trip.

Arriving at the Dutch Anglers Bar, where breakfast and dinner are served every day, you will be amazed. The photos on the walls show the most beautiful catches. Dutch record fish, European record fish and even world records, they are all there. We have arrived in fishing heaven.

Compared to fishing in Norway, you can travel to Maio very easily. Instead of two heavy suitcases, a single suitcase is more than enough here. The heavy clothes and fishing overall can stay at home; they are replaced by a few pairs of shorts, shirts, socks and boxer shorts. You don't even have to bring your fishing gear if you don't want to,

because Maio Fishing Club has everything you need for the perfect fishing trip. On beforehand, we discussed with Michael which fish species we wanted to catch and we made a plan together. For the really big fish species, such as wahoo, various medium-sized and large sharks and rays, we used his equipment. The lighter equipment – a light spinning rod and a jigging rod – we brought ourselves, because we also wanted to use our

**On Maio, you never know what you will catch! During the day, we often went searching the beaches – and it's amazing what you can find!**





A great sailfish!

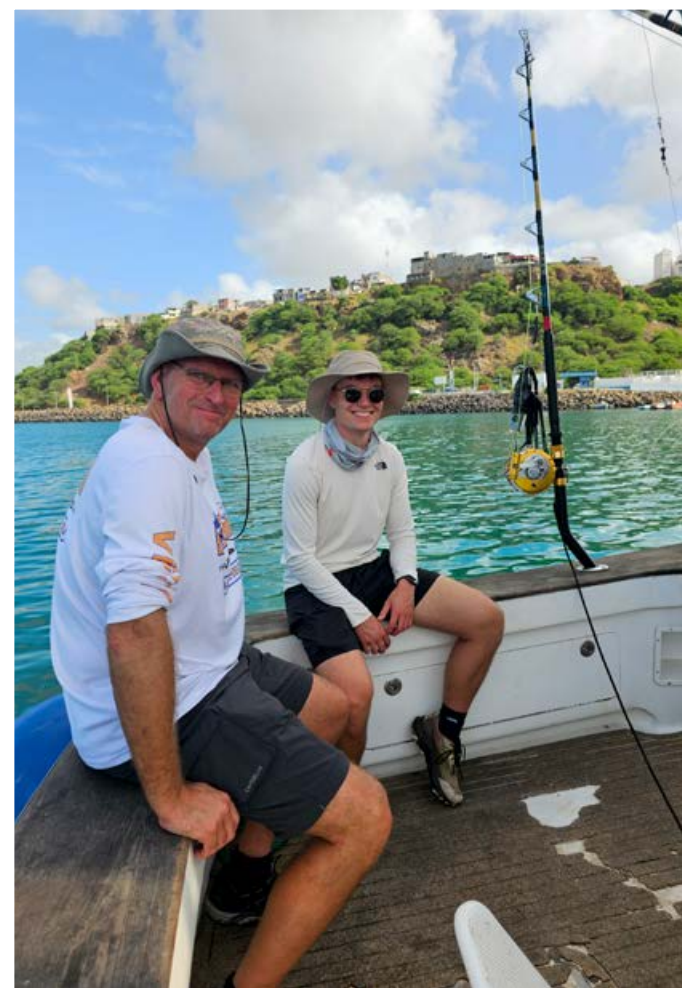
beach chair all day? Not at all, since there is so much to do on Maio. We are lucky that Sam van Ierland is our guide for shore fishing. This twenty-year-old's knowledge is enormous and with his chronic urge to fish, Sam is the perfect person to guide us this week. Every day, Sam joins us for breakfast and discusses the fishing for the coming evening with the shore anglers. Then he takes us out for the entire day. Snorkelling, beachcombing, searching for turtle nests, fishing on the most beautiful beaches, local delicacies and eating in the best restaurants are just a few of the activities that make our days fly by.

## BOAT FISHING

Every day we go fishing at anchor. On the way to the spot, we troll with large deep and shallow diving lures. Two rods are out on the port side and two on the starboard side. In the support on the upper railing is a rod with a pin rig fitted with a ballyhoo, which Sam has prepared especially for us. You never know you run into a sailfish, he explains. But most bites would normally come from Wahoo or Mahi Mahi. Marlin is also a possibility, but it's not the right season for that.

On the first day, Arjan, Casper and myself are on board. The draw has determined that Casper will take

the first strike. We have been out of the harbour for less than ten minutes when there is a dull thud on the rightmost rod. Just as Arjan taps me to ask if I've seen it to, the reel above us starts screeching. The pin rig has been taken and Casper begins a thrilling fight. Just like a wahoo, his opponent continues to swim at high speed in all directions. We are amazed when a beautiful sail breaks through the water surface. A surprising sailfish, and a good one at that. Once on board, Arjan assists Casper while I take photos and enjoy the moment. On the rest of our way out there are no more bites while trolling, so we drop anchor. Michael sets out the large shark rod. Arjan has the next turn and he has his mind set on a fat tiger shark. Hopefully it will take the stingray we are offering on a 14/0 circle hook... Except for the supported rod, everyone can choose which type of fishing they want to do. Roughly speaking, there is a choice between fishing with pieces of bait on various types, with large bait on medium-sized sharks and some other large fish species, or jigging. After assessing the situation, the three of us decide to try a different type of fishing. You can catch the greatest variety of species here with small pieces of bait. All kinds of shapes, colours and sizes are available. Rainbow runners, jacks, parrotfish, seabreams, snappers, you name



it. The fishing is super simple. A leader with two hooks baited with a piece of tuna is lowered to the bottom using a weight. Just above the bottom, you quickly get bites, first a few nibbles and then a bite that sticks. It's wonderful to see the brightly coloured fish come up from the depths.

**Chill out on board the perfect boats of Maio Fishing Club.**



**We catch the most beautiful species.**

Jigging is a more active form of fishing. The name says it all: a speed jig must be fished at high speed. After hitting the bottom, close the bail of the reel and work the speed jig upwards. It's a technique that takes a little getting used to, but once you've mastered it, you'll be hooked. Because of the



**Screaming slips were the order of the day.**

speed you bring to the jig, every bite is violent. The rod bends immediately and the drag starts doing its job. Set the hook one or two extra times and fight the fish firmly. This type of fishing is especially rewarding from a drifting boat, but it can also work well when anchored. However, you are then dependent on groups of fish swimming under the boat. We try this regularly to see if it works. If fish swim under the boat, then every drop results in a hit. At times it feels a bit like mackerel fishing at home, but then with screaming reels and beautiful fish! The tiger sharks don't let us down either: Arjan, Casper and Johan all manage to catch one. For all three, this is the biggest fish they have ever caught. The chances are good that this will remain the case, but that is not certain, because we still have more than enough plans for the future.

### **FUN TIME WITH POPPERS**

When the boat anglers return to the harbour around 6 p.m., they quickly shower and we prepare the equipment for the next day's fishing, until dinner. Every day, the menu features the fish caught the day before. Fried Wahoo turns out to be an exceptionally tasty fish.

Fried, grilled, sashimi and ceviche, what a delight. Complemented with fresh chips, rice, chicken and vegetables – we eat like kings! We came here to fish, so we don't sleep much. After dinner, we invariably head out again to let off some steam. Sam has the ideal spot for this! It's not easy fishing, but when everything goes well, the reward is great! At this spot, large horse eye jacks come hunting. It's a difficult spot with lots of obstacles and a head torch is out of the question. The only time we're allowed to use it is when a big jack is hooked. Otherwise, we have to make use of the light of the moon and the stars. Thick poppers and stickbaits should convince these fantastic fighting fish to take the bait. The motto is to make a lot of noise so that the popper really stands out. In the dark, I cannot see the action of the popper, but I listen carefully to the sound it makes. Nothing happens for a while, but as soon as I start to concentrate mainly on making as much noise as possible with my lure, my heart skips a beat. Three, four and even more luminous shadows chase the popper almost to my feet. They do this with every cast, but there is no strike. The excitement gives way to slight frustration. I go to ask

Sam if he has the solution. Make a lot of noise close to the edge is the advice. During the next chase, I decide to slam the popper a few metres in front of my feet on the water. The reaction is immediate and aggressive. When I leave the popper lie still for two seconds, the water explodes and the drag screams. The only thing I can do is keep the pressure on. The less line I give, the less chance there is of the fish reaching an obstacle. The fight is intense, with repeated bursts and the fish taking several metres of line, but everything ends well. Sam helps me to land the fish. Three excited anglers stand in amazement, looking at the beautiful Horse Eye Jack I just caught. I stop fishing and want to quietly let the day and this amazing catch sink in. Arjan and Thijs quickly grab their rods again and both get a big bite. Unfortunately, they lose the fight. Later in the week, they would more than make up for this!

## SHORE FISHING

When fishing from the shore, we mainly target various species of sharks and rays. Especially



for this type of fishing, Michael has two heavier beach rods with matching reels available. Robust and idiot-proof are the right words to describe this setup. The system used for fishing is incredibly simple. The thick braided main line is fitted with a 120/00 mm thick leader of 10 metres. Due to the rough

bottom littered with stones, this leader is a must. At the end of the leader an XXL swivel is mounted. The casting weight is mounted to this swivel with a break line. The hooklink is also tied to this: 120 cm of 100/00 nylon and 20 cm of steel wire at the end.

**Such a powerful Horse Eye jack will keep you busy!**



**A large wahoo is a feast for the eyes.**

We use a large circle hook as our standard hook. A bite on the big rod guarantees excitement. Sam explains everything from A to Z. How to attach the bait, how and where to cast, how to place the rod in the support and what to do when there is a bite – we learn it all. At our request, we are also allowed to try these rods ourselves. It's not rocket science, but setting the hook does require some skills and experience. It doesn't work with every bite, but when the hook catches flesh, the adrenaline takes over completely. The heavy rods regularly bend. We mainly catch nurse sharks, but also lemon and blacktip sharks. The nurse sharks in particular are really big. Most of them easily exceed the 2-metre mark, with the largest of the trip measuring 230 cm. The bonus fish on these rods is mine. After casting, I put the rod back in the support and tighten the line slightly so that it doesn't get caught between the rocks on the shore. Before I can rejoin the barbecue that Sam has prepared for us, I get some taps on the tip. To be on the safe side, I stand by the rod. When the drag starts to rattle, I pick up the



Endless sandy beaches where you can let off steam.

Nurse sharks that easily exceed two metres.



rod and slowly build up the pressure. The circle hook finds its way and does its job perfectly, and then the formidable opponent goes completely wild.

There is nothing, absolutely nothing, that I can do. The fish swims in a straight line towards a sandbank, the metres of line flying off the reel. No matter how much pressure I apply, I cannot prevent the fish from reaching the sandbank and swimming over it into the deeper water. Then it stops. Now it's clear that I'm dealing with a large ray. It has sucked itself to the bottom and it won't budge. Va knows the solution: he plays the line as if it were the strings of a harp. This seems to get on the ray's nerves, and it comes back to life. After a nerve-racking struggle, I finally manage to pull the megathick stingray to the side. Now I have to be really careful. Its sting is not only dangerous because of its size, but also because of the poison it contains. Sam and Va take over for a moment, the sting is covered and the hook removed. The stingray is a fish that I regularly fish for in the Netherlands, and with fish weighing several kilos, we are delighted. Now I get to pose with a fish that easily exceeds 150 kg! I am filled with joy.

## SPINNING RODS

To kill the time between strikes, we brought our light spinning rods. In the last hours of daylight, we cast all kinds of light lures. We mainly use surface lures and lures that run shallow. Deeper running lures are guaranteed to get lost in the rocks. I can't list everything we caught, there were simply too many species to sum up. Various types of jack, groupers, triggerfish, they all went for our lures. They weren't the biggest fish, but they were super strong and gave us a wonderful fight. When daylight is replaced by the beautiful starry sky and the moon, we change technique. Now it's time to fish with bait. The arti-



ficial bait is replaced by a yo-yo rig fitted with a size 4 circle hook. A piece of steel prevents any hooked shark from biting everything off. As soon as the bait hits the bottom, you feel nibbles from small fish. These nibbles are a very good indicator of whether you still have bait on the hook. If the nibbling stops, you need to replace the bait. We catch the same fish as with the artificial bait, but also some sharks. The sharks are a lot smaller than with the big rods, but with fish up to over a metre long, we have quite a bit of work to do with the spinning rods.

Whatever type of fishing we do, time seems to be sucked away

with the tide. Before you know it, the fishing day is already over. Partly due to the many strikes, the beautiful fish, our company and, of course, the fantastic views, we forget time and again what time it is. To say that we enjoyed ourselves is an understatement. The six days passed extremely quickly. One thing we know for sure, however: we will be back, and then marlin fishing will be on the menu!

For more information about this great fishing trip you can check [www.worldsbestfishingtrips.com](http://www.worldsbestfishingtrips.com) or send an e-mail to [mail@worldsbestfishingtrips.com](mailto:mail@worldsbestfishingtrips.com) ■

**One of the strongest fish in Africa.**

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