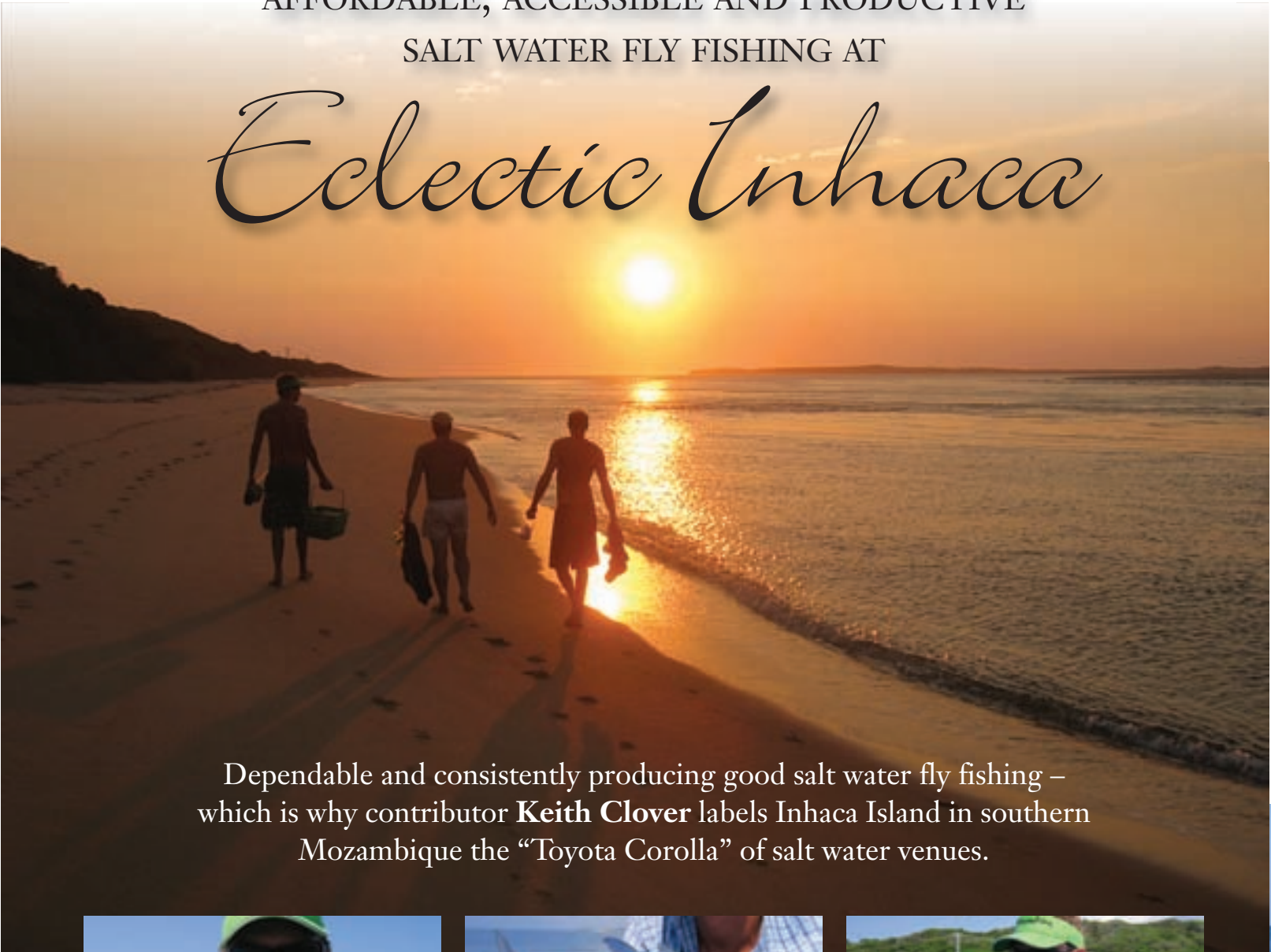


SALT WATER

AFFORDABLE, ACCESSIBLE AND PRODUCTIVE  
SALT WATER FLY FISHING AT

# Eclectic Inhaca



Dependable and consistently producing good salt water fly fishing – which is why contributor **Keith Clover** labels Inhaca Island in southern Mozambique the “Toyota Corolla” of salt water venues.



Above left to right: Fly rod species that can be successfully targeted off Inhaca Island – the author with an Indian goatfish; a bluefin kingfish and a rather large needlescaled queenfish.

**F**or many South African fly fishermen the gap between fresh and salt water fly fishing seems unsurmountable. Potential salt water fly anglers are often put off after a disappointing annual family holiday spent fishing the surf zone, or by the high price of exotic fly fishing desti-

nations – opposite extremes in the realms of salt water fly fishing. In a perfect world, there would be salt water venues offering newcomers fishing of a quality and consistency that would instill the passion and confidence to further their salt water fly fishing experiences. These hypothetical destinations would present a

diverse range of fishing scenarios, giving the newcomer a balanced outlook on various aspects of the discipline.

The fishing at these venues would be rewarding (to propagate enthusiasm) yet simultaneously challenging (ensuring anglers do not get a skewed perception of



their own abilities). Lastly, the quality of the fishing would be a fair reflection (*ceteris parabus*) of the anglers' monetary outlay – this being very subjective and a function of countless factors beyond the actual fishing.

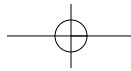
Alas, our world is far from perfect, and accordingly our hypothetically perfect salt water destination is not and never will be a reality. This fact may leave many budding salt water fly fishermen in a rather gloomy state. Pockets not deep enough to venture to exotic salt water destinations, patience not strong enough and skill inadequate to effectively fish the South African surf zone; the only answer seems to be to abandon any desire one may have to do battle in the brine and to stick to the more feasible fresh water fly fishing available in southern Africa.

However, there is hope on the horizon! Enter Inhaca Island, in my view southern Africa's ideal venue for both beginner and competent salt water fly angler looking to broaden their skills. This statement is rather bold and deservedly requires a credible explanation. If we were to judge Inhaca Island in terms of the criteria we set out for our "perfect" destination, this dynamic venue has something to offer salt water fly anglers with varying levels of skill, budget and demands.



Top: A good-sized *ignobilis* kingfish that was caught just off Hell's Gate.  
 Above: King mackerel abound in the waters around Inhaca.

Before getting stuck into the fishing, let's look at the expenses and logistics of getting to and lodging at this particular destination. At the risk of this article turning into an advertorial, I must say that Inhaca is without doubt southern Africa's most affordable Indian Ocean island fishing destination. A mere hop, skip and a jump from Johannesburg and Durban, there are numerous accommodation options on the island as well as on the mainland – the Santa Maria Peninsula being a popular option for self-drives (4x4 required). Accommodation options span from camping through self-catering lodges to 4-star resorts. But, enough of the routine stuff: let's get onto the fishing. To effectively appreciate the fishing possibilities off and around Inhaca Island, it is useful to overview the different fly fishing options available: offshore, surf, and estuary/flats fishing (last two terms used broadly for lack of a better alternative).



After heavy rains there is a pronounced dirty water line pushing out through Hell's Gate, and dredging along this "liquid structure" can produce great results. The shipping lane marker buoys are also productive hunting grounds. Here one can expect to find dorado and kingfish species as well as prodigal son. For those who do not have access to a ski-boat or the funds to charter a boat, under calm conditions it is possible to fly fish the shallow offshore reefs from fishing kayaks. Here a knowledge of the area is important since one cannot afford to spend time looking for such reefs, and not all areas around Inhaca are suitable for this type of fishing. Planning is therefore crucial. Sailfish are also successfully targeted in the waters around Inhaca by fly fishermen using teasing techniques. This requires an article in itself – one I am sure the Editor of this magazine would write with a bit of persuasion!

Above: Hookup on one of the reefs around Santa Maria.  
 Left: Coral trout are keen fly takers and can be caught on a variety of fly patterns.  
 Below: A kingfish hookup in the lee of Inhaca Island.



**OFFSHORE FLY FISHING**

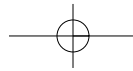
Inhaca Island is surrounded by a number of offshore reefs. These range in depth from 30ft to 100ft. They also vary vastly in size, with some no larger than a double garage and others the size of a rugby field. Concentrating your angling efforts around these reefs is a highly productive way to fish this location. Here a reliable boat equipped with up-to-date navigation and echo-sounding devices and a competent skipper are of utmost importance. Species commonly encountered when fishing the offshore reefs are kingfish, king mackerel, wahoo, prodigal son and jobfish. An assortment of reef species is also commonly caught.

If you plan to fish offshore here, it's useful to get the coordinates of productive reefs. These can be found on maritime charts, on up-to-date fishfinder/GPS units, or from helpful angling buddies. Keep an eye out for small patches of reef when travelling to and from your chosen destinations. These often produce and since they are not mapped are therefore not fished much. This type of reef is sometimes found only a couple of hundred yards offshore, which in turn saves on fuel and time.

**LAND-BASED/  
SURF FLY FISHING**

For fly anglers looking to fish from land, Inhaca offers myriad options. There are many rocky reefs and ledges that allow anglers to effectively fish the deeper water side at low tide. As the tides begin to push, these same reefs become feeding grounds for many different fly rod species. The southern tip of Inhaca and northern point of Santa Maria Peninsula offer superb shore-based fly fishing. Here the strong current produced





**“THE SOUTHERN TIP OF INHACA AND NORTHERN POINT OF SANTA MARIA PENINSULA OFFER SUPERB SHORE-BASED FLY FISHING.”**

**INHACA**  
Need to know

**TACKLE REQUIREMENTS:**

- 10-wt to 12-wt rods matched with fast sinking lines/shooting heads are needed to get down to the fish holding and hunting around these reefs. A selection of heavily weighted Clousers in various colour combinations are most suited to this style of fishing; chartreuse-over-white and tan-over-white being very productive.
- Shore-based fishing will require rods from 8-wt to 10-wt, with intermediate, floating and fast sinking lines all having application.
- Stripping basket, rock shoes and pliers are all essential.

Above: The southern tip of Inhaca Island offers surf fishing opportunities.

Right (insert): Threespot pompano can be caught fishing the white water off Santa Maria point.

by the waters of Maputo Bay rushing out through Hell’s Gate results in deep, productive waters within easy casting distance of the shore. This deep, fast-flowing water, combined with the rocky reef extending out from Santa Maria, creates the perfect hunting ground for worthy fly rod targets. Species commonly landed in these areas include kingfish (mainly juveniles, but bigger fish are always a possibility), queenfish, pompano, springer, needlescaled queenfish, Indian goatfish, and the occasional bonefish. Unless you are specifically targeting large kingfish, 8-wt rods matched with either a sink tip or intermediate line will suffice. Flies should include Crazy Charlies, Mud Charlies, Salty Buggers and smaller Clousers.

If you specifically want to target bigger kingfish and barracuda, 10-wt rods matched with floating and intermediate lines are best to cast the bigger poppers and baitfish imitations required. A stripping basket, rock shoes or wading boots and a glove to keep a tight grip on a wet cork handle are essential. A headlight would not go amiss, particularly for those late evenings and early mornings when the tides are just right.

**ESTUARY AND FLATS**

In the true sense, Inhaca does not cater for these types of fishing – but with a bit of imagination and “lateral” use of the above terms, you may be pleasantly

surprised by what is on offer. The leeward side of Inhaca Island is home to numerous sandbanks and channels. On dropping and rising tides it is possible to walk/wade these sandbanks in search of juvenile kingfish and even bonefish. This fishing is by no means productive, and should never be one’s reason for visiting the area, but for those with some time on their hands it is always fun to cast a fly at shoals of small feeding kingies. If you fail to catch anything, you can always write the experience off to training for the day when you do get to cast a fly in a real flats destination.

The term “estuary fishing” is also used very loosely here. The water flowing in and out of Hell’s Gate provides fly fishing scenarios very similar to those in deep tidal estuaries. Here my favourite type of fishing is drifting through Hell’s Gate on an incoming tide, with a sinking or intermediate line, casting flies such as Siliclone Mulletts, Clousers and Polar Fibre baitfish imitations. Most of the fishing is blind, with small queenfish and kingies providing most of the action. This is real “lucky packet” fishing – you can never be certain what will attach itself to the end of your line!

In a nutshell, that is my view on Inhaca Island, and the eclectic angling opportunities it offers the salt water fly angler. It may not match the best international destinations – but then



**ACCOMMODATION:**

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- Pestana Inhaca Lodge  
Tel: 00258 21 760 003  
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again neither does the cost. It would be fair to label Inhaca the “Toyota Corolla” of salt water fly fishing destinations. It is reliable, offers value for money, and the extras you pay for can turn it into a rather exclusive option, yet the standard package performs well. It is respectable, and the perfect base from which to upgrade to more elite options when finances (and skill levels) allow. Most of all, on a good day it really takes some beating.

