**Panama – Tropic Star Lodge**

**Pre-Trip Planner**

**ENTRY INTO PANAMA**

**YOU WILL NEED A VALID PASSPORT FOR TRAVEL TO PANAMA.** It is recommended to have at least six months validity on your passport from the time of your return date on your scheduled trip. Minors will also need a notarized letter of authorization if traveling with a single parent. Non U.S. citizens should check with their consulate to verify required travel documentation.

Upon arrival at Tocumen International Airport, a representative from the Royal Salon will meet your international flight and assist you through immigration and customs and take you into the Royal Saloon lounge. This person will request your passport, tourist card, baggage claim tickets and any key or combinations for your luggage. Please also give them $1.00 per bag for the luggage porters. While you relax and enjoy a complimentary drink in the VIP Royal Saloon, they will take care of all your documentation and luggage. You will then be escorted to your City Transfer Service to take you to your hotel. Prior to boarding the vehicle, please check that all baggage is accounted for.

VERY IMPORTANT: Please review your airlines website if you have any questions on baggage. Trek assumes no responsibility for excess luggage. For any questions regarding what you can bring as carry-on luggage please visit <http://www.tsa.gov/traveler-information/prohibited-items>

**BAGGAGE INFORMATION**

VERY IMPORTANT – Please review your airlines website if you have any questions on baggage. Airline’s policies differ on the amount of checked baggage allowed. Current size restrictions on checked bags are that suitcases should be no more than 62 inches and weigh no more than 50 pounds per bag. For any questions regarding what you can bring as carry-on luggage please visit <http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/index.shtm>

**THE TRIP**

The next day you will be picked up at the hotel and transferred to the domestic airport. You must arrive at Albrook Airport at least forty-five minutes prior to departure so that carry-on luggage can be weighed and loaded aboard the aircraft. If there are any changes we will leave a message at your hotel. You must show your passport, so keep it handy for flights to and from Pinas. DO NOT PUT IN YOUR CHECKED LUGGAGE! After a 50-minute flight, you arrive at the Piñas Bay airstrip. You are then transported to our panga boat for the breathtaking 10-minute boat trip to the Lodge.

Depending on the tides, it may be necessary for you to get your feet wet while boarding the panga. Be prepared with slip off shoes or beach shoes that can get wet and/or easily removed; wear shorts or pants that can be rolled up. Upon your arrival at the Lodge, you will be greeted by our staff and given a short orientation followed by lunch. There is a Welcome Party this evening around the pool, followed by a buffet barbeque dinner, where you can get acquainted with the other guests.

After your week of salt water action, you are to be transferred to the Piñas airstrip for your flight back to Panama City, then transported to your hotel or Int’l Airport. The remainder of the day is open for you to enjoy Panama City. Remember to keep passports handy for your arrival back into the city.

The next day, transfer from your hotel to the Tocumen International Airport for your departure flight out of Panama City. The pick up time will be given to you 2 nights before you depart. Any changes must be done by 4:00 p.m., the following day after you receive (48 hours prior to your departure)

**THE FISHING**

Your 5:30am wake up call is a staff member knocking on your door with a cup of coffee, juice or tea. Breakfast is served in the dining room at your leisure. The fishing boats depart the Lodge at 6:30am or later if requested. Lines up at 3:00pm, unless you have a fish on! For safety purposes all boats must return to port well before dark. Other activities include swimming, beachcombing, snorkeling, exploring jungle rivers, hiking and kayaking.

Our entire rainbow fleet of customized, fully rigged, 31-foot Bertram boats with twin diesel Detroit engines are more than efficient for our waters in Piñas. Our fleet consists of fourteen boats, but we always keep at least one in reserve for back up, to ensure that you are always fishing. We have tuna tubes/live-bait well combos and downriggers on each boat.

Each boat is provided with Shimano or Penn International reels, and custom Tropic Star Offshore Series Cape Fear rods in the 16 to 50 lb. class. If you want to fly fish or fish with light tackle (anything under 16 lb.) you will need to bring your own. You will find your boat equipped with spinning rods, bait rods, hand lines, harnesses, belly gimbals, Moldcraft lures, one set of teasers, marlin and sailfish leaders with circle hooks, gaffs, and a limited supply of plugs.

Tropic Star Lodge is the first fishing lodge ever to exclusively use circle hooks for all bill fishing. Our crews have received international recognition for the innovation and skill they apply to the rigging of circle hooks to their Panama strip baits for sailfish, as well as live bait for marlin.

**MEALS AT TROPIC STAR**

The catch of the day is offered as well as our regular main course selection. The chefs prepare various specialties, such as the famous Tropic Star Lodge Black Bean Soup, freshly baked bread and pies, ceviche, sashimi, Baked Alaska and many more varied and delectable dishes. Our scenic dining room offers the perfect setting every night for our multi course dinners, served with complimentary wine. When you arrive on Saturday, dinner is buffet style at the pool, where the chefs prepare your fish, chicken, ribs or steak kabobs on the outdoor grill***. If you have special dietary needs or restrictions, please let us know at the time of your booking.***

Cocktails are served along with appetizers prepared from the catch of the day, plantains, and homemade potato chips. Guests usually socialize, exchanging their fish stories in the air-conditioned bar, the restaurant’s veranda, or the pool. The freshwater swimming pool and poolside bar are very popular places to be after a day of fishing.

**OTHER ACTIVITIES**

There are several nature hikes you can take right from the Lodge. A popular hike for many guests is the trail up and over a small mountain where you’ll find a beautiful secluded white sand beach. There is limited snorkeling equipment available for “White Beach” adventures. **Please keep in mind that this hike is only for the physically fit.** Another great way to experience the surrounding rainforest is in a kayak; this is not as strenuous as the hike and this activity is accessible to most people. Kayaks are complimentary and you can go off on your own to explore the bay or even paddle up the Piñas River.

There is the option to visit the local Native-Indian village this is a complimentary, guided tour. However, a $5.00 donation will be collected and given to the Indian chief to benefit his people. This trip is available for groups of six or more. This trip is normally done one day a week after fishing. These beautiful indigenous Indians demonstrate a few of their traditional dances and display artisan crafts for sale. If you are so inclined, appropriate gifts to take to the native people are used clothing, cloth, thread and needles or school supplies for the children. Bring your camera, they love having their picture taken!

**WEATHER**

The weather in Panama will be hot, so be prepared. Take polarized sunglasses, sunscreen, light cotton clothing and a broad brimmed hat. If you are fishing in the April-October time frame, it would not hurt to pack some light raingear. Although bugs are generally not a problem, it is a good idea to throw in a small bottle of repellant. Temperatures during the day will be in the 90’s while evening lows should be comfortable in the low 70’s.

**WHAT TO BRING**

Dress at the lodge will of course be very casual, but if you are planning to stay in Panama City you should consider packing a pair of long pants as most of the nicer dining establishments do request that gentlemen wear slacks.

**ELECTRICAL CURRENT**

Panama uses 110 volts, just like the United States.

**CURRENCY**

The currency in Panama is the Balboa and trades evenly with the U.S. dollar. There is actually no need to exchange dollars as U.S currency is accepted throughout the country. Please bring small bills, as most shops will be give you change in Balboas instead of dollars.

**GRATIUTIES**

Your captain and mate are not covered by this built in gratuity and should be tipped personally by you at the end of your fishing trip. The usual and customary gratuity for the Captain and mate are $100.00-$150.00 per day of fishing to cover the boat. Please pay this gratuity to your crew in cash, **no traveler's checks.** If you have a second mate on board, please add $ 20.00 to the above recommendation. We have two dock masters and a customary gratuity for them would be $20.00 per person per week, fishing guest only. The management team can be tipped at your discretion. House gratuities (cooks, chef, waiters, housekeeping etc) figure on about $250.00 per person for the stay on short week, $350.00 per person for full week.

**MEDICAL INFORMATION**

We suggest you check with your personal physician or The Center for Disease Control (800-311-3435 or WWW.CDC.GOV) regarding inoculation information for this area.

**TRAVEL PROTECTION**

Trek Safaris recommends that you purchase a travel protection plan. For your convenience, we offer a travel protection plan from Arch Roamright. You should have received the brochure at the time of final billing. Please contact Trek to purchase the travel protection plan. To view the policy, go to Arch Roamright's website: http://treksafaris.archinsurancesolutions.com. Travel Insurance is underwritten by Arch Insurance Company, NAIC #11150.

 **IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS**

Tropic Star (US office) – 800-682-3424 or 407-843-0125

Bonnie Karp (after hours emergencies for Tropic Star) – 407-267-6231

Trek Safaris (24 HR Line) – 904-273-7800

Trek Safaris (Reservation Line) – 800-654-9915

***Trek Safaris maintains a 24 hour answering service on its (904)-273-7800 number. Please call that number should you have any problems getting in touch with your party.***

**SUGGESTED PACKING LIST**

\_\_\_ Bags and suitcases

\_\_\_ Daypack

\_\_\_ Luggage IDs

\_\_\_ Passport / Personal ID / Driver’s License (including photocopies)

\_\_\_ Airline Tickets

\_\_\_ Emergency contact information

\_\_\_ Wallet and cash

\_\_\_ Credit/ATM Cards (set up for international use)

\_\_\_ Correspondence related to the trip (any letters or trip itinerary you received from Trek)

\_\_\_ Toothbrush, Tooth paste and floss

\_\_\_ Razors and Shaving cream

\_\_\_ Shampoo / Deodorant

\_\_\_ Lip balm and sunscreen (high SPF sunscreen)

\_\_\_ Any Medications you are taking

\_\_\_ Prescription Eyeglasses (and a spare)

\_\_\_ Reading glasses

\_\_\_ Sunglasses (polarized) (good idea to bring extra pair)

\_\_\_ Flashlight & batteries

\_\_\_ Camera & memory cards

\_\_\_ Camera batteries and charger

\_\_\_ Insect Repellant

\_\_\_ Rain Jacket (lightweight)

\_\_\_ Lightweight fishing shirts (2 or 3 -- long sleeve suggested)

\_\_\_ Tropical weight pants (2 pair)

\_\_\_ Fishing shorts (2 pair)

\_\_\_ Casual pants (2 pair)

\_\_\_ Casual shorts (2 pair)

\_\_\_ Casual Shirts (2 or 3)

\_\_\_ Shoes for fishing (flip-flops, tennis shoes, crocs or boat shoes)

\_\_\_ Underwear and socks (3 to 4 pair of each)

\_\_\_ Swimsuit

\_\_\_ Fishing cap (wide brim suggested)

\_\_\_ Fishing Gloves (sun gloves)

\_\_\_ Fishing Rods

\_\_\_ Fishing Reels

\_\_\_ Fishing lures / flies