

# Not your typical February

Being a rather dedicated ice angler from Thunder Bay, and it being mid February, something comfortable and normal for me would be standing on the frozen waters of Lake Superior, in sub zero temperatures, with bitingly cold winds licking at my face, working my jigging rod with frozen fingers, trying to entice a lake trout or whitefish to bite. Instead of this usual February norm, this past February I found myself somewhere entirely different; still fishing, but in an entirely different way, in an entirely different place!

On a recent trip my wife and I took to the Mayan Riviera region of Mexico, I found an outfitter that offered spear fishing, and it seemed like something I couldn't not do, as after chatting with the folks about their operation, we booked a day aboard their boat for a day of spearfishing in the Caribbean.

Now I was a bit apprehensive about this adventure, as its done with a spear gun, and you free dive; using a mask and snorkel and oversized fins to get you down to spearing depth, and try and hold your breath for as long as possible to give you an opportunity at a fish. Despite my hesitations I booked it, and on the morning of, hopped in a taxi from the resort, and headed downtown to the beach to meet the crew. It was a beautiful day, with temps

near 30°C, and the sun beating down. The wind was pretty serious, making for a pretty substantial chop on the sea, but not enough to deter the folks running the spearfishing operation.

We met up with the owner of the small operation, his captain and his guide, and a few other folks who were taking park in this adventure, and loaded up onto the boat and headed out through the swells. Onboard, we got a tutorial on using the spear guns, and what fish we were after, and headed to the first destination. It was a little daunting, rolling overboard amidst giant swells, out in the middle of the ocean, but it was also quite the rush. After getting in the water, and getting equipped, I began swimming around, in search of my prey. The basic idea is swimming around reefs, shoals, shipwrecks or along the shore-

line, and looking for cruising fish that you can dive down to. Also, a lot of the fish remain hidden in vegetation, rocks, or just blend in, and you need to dive down deep as you can, hold your breath, and wait and watch, hoping something will come into range. Some places we were diving were over 130' of water, and you would dive down as deep as you can, watching fish all around, waiting for some to swim up to you or pass by. It was a bit unnerving diving 15 or 20' down, looking back up to the surface way up there, but it was also an invigorating and incredible exciting experience.

It didn't take long for me to start getting a feel for proper diving technique, which was made a lot easier with the use of the long free diving fins I had been loaned. I saw hundreds if not thousands of fish, but was waiting for the right size and species to try my hand at spearing. After diving down countless times, and having fish race off, or unable to get a good shot, I finally had some opportunities. Unfortunately for me, it seemed that shooting a spear gun was more difficult than I had envisioned, as I missed several fish. Trying to hold the long spear gun in one hand, and point and shoot at a moving fish proved to be quite the chore.

After several attempts, I finally got it right, while diving over a sunken ship in 100+ feet of water. There

were schools and schools of fish throughout the water column, and you could see what appeared to be giant fish circling below around the ship, and schools of fish at every depth. I managed to dive down about 20', and hung out as long as I could until opportunity presented itself, and I was able to make a great shot on what appeared to be the biggest fish I had ever snorkeled by, a yellow jack.

The day continued on, visiting a half dozen different spots, and seeing an incredible variety of beautiful fish, enjoying the snorkeling on the reefs as much as anything. At the end of the day, we had a few fish on board, and headed back to the beach. I was spent from spending the day swimming and diving, and just thrilled with the exciting day I'd just had. Back on shore I got some photos of the catch, and was told we could bring fish to any local restaurant down the street and they would grill it up. In the end, it seemed the fellows running the operation were pretty excited to take it home to their families, and were thrilled to have a feast to bring home.

Now again, it was certainly a different kind of fishing experience, being the first time I've ever held a spear gun, and a bit of a different environment than I'm used to being in, but it was an incredibly memorable experience, one I hope to repeat again on my next sunny getaway!

Written by

**Tom Armstrong**  
OUTDOORS GUIDE

Tom is an avid Outdoorsman from Thunder Bay. As an ardent angler, hunter and sportsman, he has turned his passion for the outdoors into a hobby as an Outdoors Writer and Photographer.

To see photos or articles, or for more info, visit [www.tomarmstrongoutdoors.com](http://www.tomarmstrongoutdoors.com)



The author with a MX Yellowjack