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The Best Thing to Do in the Hamptons This Summer? Tuna Fishing

Wall Street workers are flying out from New York on Friday and returning on Saturday with coolers full of tuna and sea bass.



Catching tuna on *Thermocline*, the Montauk Anglers Club charter boat. *Photographer: Mike Cuomo*

By Kate Krader

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For the past 2 1/2 years, Will Cornacchia has managed the Montauk Anglers Club, located across the street from Montauk Airport in the easternmost part of New York's Hamptons.

In that time, Cornacchia, who worked in investment-grade credit sales at Goldman Sachs Group Inc. before migrating to Montauk, has seen a notable rise in one customer demographic for his fishing excursions: his former peers.

Daniel Regina, a high-yield-bond broker at BGC Partners, has fished on almost a dozen Montauk Angler expeditions in the past few years. On his most recent, in September, he says: "We caught a bunch of fish—stripers [striped bass], bluefish, sea bass. Then we came back to the marina and they cooked the fish up for us, and we watched *Monday Night Football*."

Charter boat fishing is suddenly the hottest thing for people who spend their summers on Long Island.

Chris Squeri, co-owner of the Atlantic Yacht Haven marina in Freeport, New York, says the profile of people signing up for the Montauk Canyon Challenge—a fishing competition in which he’s tournament director—is evolving. “We’ve grown about 50% in the number of boats for the tournament over the last five years; last year it was 60 boats, this year we’re expecting 75 to 80. You’re seeing more Wall Street types and hedge fund guys, along with Joe Fisherman.”

Deane Lambros, a partner at Canyon Runner in Jersey Shore, New Jersey—which specializes in chartered boat trips around the Northeast as well as the mid-Atlantic –similarly sees increased interest from Wall Street workers. “Around the tristate area, there’s a demographic of business people looking for experiences,” he says. Canyon Runner memberships include boating and fishing tutorials and consultations, and have increased 20% annually over the past few years, now exceeding 400 members, he says.

The End of the 12-Hour Fishing Trip



The Montauk Anglers Club has logged an increase in the number of requests for docking spaces from people in the financial world, according to manager Will Cornacchia. *Source: Montauk Anglers Club*

The vogue for angling is the result of converging trends, the biggest of which is that it has become less time-consuming for busy people. Trips that used to be 12-hour long endurance tests now take closer to five or six hours. Boats are more powerful and more comfortable. “It’s definitely become more accessible,” says Regina, who lives in Montauk. “The boats have faster engines; you get out to the fish a lot quicker than you used to.”

And since Starlink became more available around 2022, people can take work calls in what were previously dead zones for cell signals. “With Blade or another helicopter [operator], you can quickly get out east and go out fishing for the day,” says Lambros. “And with Starlink, you can conduct your business out there, too.”

Big game fish are swimming closer to shore, too. Tuna, for example, have changed their migration patterns over the past several years. Restrictions on catching forage fish that these wall-worthy fish snack on, known as menhaden, are part of the reason tuna abound.

“Historically, in the northeast—in New York, Rhode Island and New Jersey—you’d have to run 70, 80, 100 miles to get to the waters where tuna migrate,” says Cornacchia. “Now it’s 20 to 25 miles.”

Squeri says this is especially true off the East End of Long Island. “It’s helped make it more accessible for casual fishermen and people who are busy, who wouldn’t normally have entertained the thought of tuna fishing,” he says.

More people are buying boats in general. In 2020, “pandemic boats” took off; compared with 2019, sales rose 12% to hit a 13-year high.

The Thrill of the Catch



A successful tuna fishing excursion. *Photographer: Mike Cuomo*

Cornacchia says people from the financial world are also booking more boat slips at Montauk Angler's Club, his family's business. The 157-slip space is available for boats up to 150 feet. Rates for an Anglers Club charter vary, depending on the length and number of passengers, but an average half-day charter service runs to about \$3,400.

The routine goes something like this: Customers arrive on Friday afternoons, often by helicopter and seaplane at the neighboring airport. They grab beers and flash-fried calamari and lobster rolls at the club's Gin Beach Cafe and head to a nearby hotel, such as the Montauk Yacht Club. At around 4 a.m. the next day, they appear on the dock, ready to fish on the club's 50-foot charter boat, the *Thermocline*.

Cornacchia relates the conclusion of a recent experience. "A group of three people caught seven yellowfin tuna. We were back on the dock by 11:30. One of them took a tuna loin to a local sushi chef, who prepared it eight different ways."



A separate group's catch included a bluefin tuna and a handful of cod, flounder, pollack and sea bass. "They flew home around 4 p.m. with a very nice variety of fresh fish," says Cornacchia.

He notes that the rise in fishing hasn't replaced golfing. "We've had customers charter boats out of our marina to bring them from Montauk to Fishers Island to play the course there."

Interest in fishing goes beyond morning excursions. Cornacchia says one reason it appeals to his former colleagues is that it's an exhilarating, social, outdoor experience that contrasts starkly with long hours at a trading desk.

Lambros concurs. Beyond the exhilaration of landing a 300-pound tuna, he finds being on the water notably stimulating. "You get out on a boat, and it's whales and birds—interesting natural phenomena that people don't see in an office. It's the experience of getting out there."