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How-To & Tips Articles

Rainbow Trout Fly Fishing Tips and Gear

This article was written for Huk Performance Fishing, a sportfishing apparel company. The goal of the article was to provide an overview of fly fishing for rainbow trout including what gear to use and fishing tips. The client also wanted a soft product pitch at the end of the article to link to some of their fly fishing clothing. The live article can be viewed at this link:

<https://www.hukgear.com/blogs/news/rainbow-trout-fly-fishing-tips-gear>

It's hard to imagine a more fly-rod-perfect species than rainbow trout. They're abundant in many streams, tailwaters, and lakes throughout the country providing ample catching opportunities, yet are wary enough to pose a serious (and highly addictive) angling challenge.

Hooking and landing these iridescent, bug-hungry beauties is no easy task, but with the right gear, some basic fly presentation skills, and a bit of fisherman's luck, it can be done. Here are a few tips to help you get started.

1. Gear Up with a Rainbow-Ready Fly Fishing Outfit

If you're just getting into the sport and are shopping for your first fly fishing outfit, here is a versatile setup that will catch rainbows in 90 percent of the water you fish:

- **9 foot, 5 or 6-weight rod and reel.** A 5-weight rod will work fine in most situations, but bumping up to a 6-weight makes casting larger flies and coping with strong winds much easier.
- **Trout-specific weight-forward floating line.** Trout-specific lines are designed for optimal performance in the cold waters in which trout reside.
- **9-foot 5X nylon knotless tapered leader.** This versatile leader is strong enough to tame a healthy rainbow but light enough for delicate presentations and drag-free drifts.
- **Spools of 4X, 5X, and 6X nylon tippet.** You'll need the 4X and 5X to rebuild your leader when it gets short from changing flies. The 6X is handy when sizing down to smaller dry flies.
- **A fly box full of fish-catching flies.** There are literally thousands of flies that will catch rainbow trout. Go to your local fly shop and ask what's working. When in doubt, keep woolly buggers, hare's ear nymphs, and parachute Adam's dry flies with you at all times.

- **Everything else.** Nippers for snipping tippet when changing flies, hemostats for mashing down barbs and unhooking fish, a landing net, waders and wading boots, and a bag or vest to tote it all along.

2. Change Presentation Before Changing Flies

If you aren't getting any bites, it's easy to get sucked into the downward spiral of fly-changing death. Before you know it, you've tied on every fly in your box and your leader that started out 9 feet long has been snipped down to 5 feet. But fear not, there's hope...

More often than not, a rainbow trout will be less concerned with what a fly looks like than how it behaves and moves in the water. Of course, there are times when trout are selective, feeding only on a specific type of insect, but generally, they aren't very picky.

So next time you're getting snubbed, don't reach for your fly box. Instead, take a good look at the water and start getting creative. How can you change your presentation so that your fly drifts with less drag in a more natural and convincing way? Try and try and try, and if still nothing, go ahead, tie on something else.

3. Focus on Sub-Surface Action

It's so tempting to only fish dry flies. There's nothing more picturesque than a football-sized rainbow lumbering up to the surface to sip in your diminutive blue-winged olive. But unfortunately, unless a significant hatch is happening, rainbow trout do the vast majority of their feeding sub-surface.

Nymphs, wet flies, and streamers are your best friends. And don't be afraid to use a strike indicator and weighted flies. If you would rather free-line it, tie on a soft-hackle wet fly, cast 45 degrees downstream and slowly swing the fly across the current. Sometimes, if you want to catch fish, you have to do what it takes to get your fly where the fish are.

4. Strike Firm, Strike Often

Be ready to set the hook at all times. Rainbows, even big ones, can be dainty eaters. Don't let a tiny bite fool you. When you feel even the faintest twitch, raise that rod tip and set the hook.

5. Fish Hard All Day Long

The more time you spend on the water, the greater your odds of outwitting a nice fat rainbow. But to stay on the water all day, you need to be comfortable and ready for anything Mother Nature stirs up.

The best advice? Dress in layers. Start with a T-shirt like the Huk KScott Brown Trout Tee, pull on a mid-layer like the Huk Kryptex Fleece 1/4 Zip, and if there's a chance of rain or strong winds, stash the Huk Packable Rain Jacket in your bag. That way, if that magical hatch does materialize drawing lunker rainbows to the surface, you'll be ready no matter what the weather's doing.

How to Build a Campfire

This article was written for GuyCounseling.com, a men's outdoors, health, and fitness blog. The client wanted an article that walked readers through how to build a fire from start to finish, geared towards beginners who may have never built a fire. The live article can be viewed at this link:

<http://www.guycounseling.com/fire-building-skills/>

Man and fire are inseparable. And although we no longer depend on wood fires for our cooking and warmth, knowing how to build a campfire is one of the most timeless and fundamental skills we can possess. But beyond a fire's utility, the simple act of gathering and arranging wood to be set ablaze is immensely satisfying unto itself.

In this article, you'll learn everything you need to know about building effective campfires including the supplies and materials needed, how to select a fire site, and the basic fire-building procedure. Then, we'll show you how to modify a campfire for specific purposes including cooking, staying warm in the woods, and survival.

Campfire Supply List

Let's start with the core ingredients of any good campfire: tinder, kindling, and fuel wood.

Tinder, Kindling, and Fuel Wood

Whether you're deep in the woods or just hanging out by the river for the day, if you can rummage up these three materials you'll be well on your way to a roaring fire.

Tinder

In the fire-making process, the role of tinder is to capture the initial spark or flame you generate in order to spread it to the rest of the wood.

There are many different materials suitable for tinder — wood shavings, dry grass, dry leaves, dead moss, newspaper, toilet paper, or even drier lint among other things.

No matter what you have on hand, the most important thing to remember when gathering tinder is this:

The drier the better.

Wet tinder is extremely difficult to light and certain to lead to frustration and possibly a fireless night. So if you're planning a trip to a damp area or see rain in the forecast, be sure to bring plenty of dry tinder with you.

Kindling

The role of kindling is to catch the flame coming off the tinder and transfer it to the larger pieces of fuel wood.

Ideal kindling includes twigs and small branches that are dead and very dry. Try to collect a range of kindling sizes from twigs with a diameter smaller than a no. 2 pencil to sticks roughly the diameter of your middle finger. Dry strips of bark can also make great kindling.

Whatever you do, avoid taking your kindling from live trees. Green branches are often very moist and difficult to ignite.

Fuel Wood

While tinder and kindling are only used when starting your campfire, fuel wood is what keeps the fire going into the night.

The size of your fuel wood is the most important factor to consider. It can be significantly larger than your kindling, but not so large that it struggles to catch flame from the kindling. For most campfires, dead, dry logs no larger than 5 or 6 inches in diameter make great fuel wood.

Tools for Ignition

Of course, if you want to embrace your primitive side, you can light a fire with nothing more than your bare hands, a stick, and a healthy dose of gumption. But for our purposes, more modern implements of ignition are completely acceptable.

The specific tool you use to ignite your fire isn't important as long as it can deliver a spark or flame to your tinder reliably and with relative ease.

Here are three of the best options:

Matches

Matches that are waterproof and windproof should be on your person whenever you trek into the woods. These are by far the most reliable tools to get a fire started quickly and efficiently. Just be sure the matches you buy are of the "strike anywhere" variety.

Lighter

Nothing fancy needed here. A simple disposable gas station lighter will do. For added peace of mind, keep one lighter in your pocket and an extra in your backpack.

Flint and Steel

For extended trips into the backcountry, it's a good idea to bring along a flint and steel. This time-tested combination generates a shower of sparks when struck together, and generally, works even when wet. Plus, a flint and steel will last way longer than a box of matches or a lighter.

Other Supplies

With your combustibles and tools for ignition acquired, your campfire is only a few steps away. But before you get started, there are a few other items you should have with you when building a campfire.

Bucket of Water

As a safety measure, keep a bucket of water within arms reach of your campfire. That way, if it gets out of hand you can easily douse it and keep it contained. When you're ready to turn in for the night, you'll use the water to put the fire out completely. More on that later.

Ax or Hatchet

While not mandatory, a sharp ax or hatchet can make the wood gathering process much easier.

Basic Campfire Building Procedure

As you'll discover, once you get the tinder, kindling, and fuel wood in the right arrangement and deliver a spark to the perfect spot, the fire happens almost automatically. But before any wood is stacked or flames sparked, a proper site must be staked out.

Choosing a Site for Your Campfire

Safety is key when selecting a site for your campfire. If you're camping in an area with designated fire pits, use them. If you're in the backcountry or in an undesignated area, you'll most likely have to create your own fire site.

Choose a location that's far away from anything flammable — bushes, trees, and vehicles. Once you have a suitable location, it's time to create a fire bed.

Creating a Fire Bed

A fire bed is nothing more than the ground on which you build your fire. And it should be exactly that — earthen ground, not vegetation of any kind. If you can't find a vegetation-free spot you'll need to clear one yourself. A shovel can be helpful in this instance, but several stiff kicks of your boot should do the trick.

Ideally, your fire bed should also be even. If it's rocky or pivoted, add extra dirt to the bed to even it out.

As a final touch, place large stones around the perimeter of the fire bed. This provides a barrier against the wind to keep the coals and embers from escaping.

Building a Teepee Fire

Perhaps the most effective campfire arrangement is the classic teepee. It can be used to build fires of all sizes from a tiny cooking fire for boiling a quick cup of coffee to a raging bonfire.

Here's how it's done:

- 1. Place your tinder in the center of the fire bed.** Use plenty and keep it compact.
- 2. Place kindling around the tinder to form a teepee shape.** Start with your smallest kindling sticks and gradually build up to larger pieces. Don't cover the tinder completely; keep a small space open for ignition.
- 3. Arrange several pieces of fuel wood in a teepee formation** on top of the kindling.
- 4. Light the tinder with your matches, lighter, or flint and steel.** The tinder should catch flame immediately and slowly start spreading to the kindling. If the tinder isn't igniting, gently blow on the embers to stoke the flame.
- 5. If all goes well, the kindling will catch flame and in turn ignite the fuel wood.** As the fire takes off, the teepee will eventually collapse at which point you can use a sturdy stick to consolidate the burning wood in the center of the fire bed. Add more fuel wood as needed.

Building the Perfect Campfire for Any Situation

Now that we've covered the materials and basic procedure for building a campfire, let's take a look at some ways to adapt a fire for specific uses.

Campfires for Cooking

Don't be surprised if the meals you prepare over an open fire are the most delicious and memorable of your life. Fire adds a rich, smoky quality to food that's hard to replicate in the kitchen.

To get you started, here are two quick ways to build a campfire for cooking:

Campfire for Quick Meals

If you only need to heat up a can of chili or boil a pot of coffee, start out by building a teepee fire just like we covered. The main difference here is that instead of adding large pieces of fuel wood, use only small kindling twigs. Light the tinder and when the twigs catch fire, add more to keep the flame going. Once you have a decent bed of coals, place your pot directly on the fire. To keep the fire going, continue adding twigs around the outside of the pot.

This small but mighty fire is nimble enough to make quick temperature adjustments and only takes a few minutes to fully extinguish.

Campfire for Large Meals

When you want to cook one or more full pots of food, here's an easy modification you can make to the basic teepee fire...

Start by building a medium to large teepee fire with plenty of fuel wood. Let it burn down enough so that the large pieces of wood are fully burned and glowing.

Now here's the trick...

After you consolidate the fire, take two large logs — ideally green or wet — and place them on opposite sides of the fire. The logs should be close enough to hold your pot so that it's positioned over the fire.

Voila! A backwoods kitchen range.

Campfires for Warmth

Whether you're fending for your life or just enjoying some time in the woods, staying warm is incredibly important. Here's a relatively simple modification to make to the basic teepee fire that will keep you nice and toasty...

Building a Reflection Wall Fire

Campfires on their own generate plenty of heat, but the problem is that it disperses in all directions. This technique solves that problem by reflecting the heat of the fire back to you using a wall — just like a fireplace.

There are two main ways to build a reflection wall fire: you can use an existing wall like a cliff or cut bank, or you can build your own wall with logs.

If you can find a suitable cliff or wall, simply build your fire directly in front of the cliff and sit facing it. Much of the fire's heat that would normally dissipate will be directed straight toward you.

If you can't find a natural wall, it's time to build your own. Before you build your teepee fire, find two sturdy poles — skinny lodgepole pines work great — and drive them into the ground at a slight angle away from your fire bed. Next, gather several logs and stack them up against the poles to form a makeshift wall. Try to use wet logs if possible so they won't burn.

Build your fire and sit facing the wall you just built. Instant fireplace!

Campfires for Survival

The campfire methods we outlined for cooking and keeping warm are relatively specific. But when you find yourself in a survival situation, you might not have the luxury of building a specialized fire for your needs. While these methods can still be used, a campfire for survival often times must serve many purposes simultaneously.

Here are a few ways you might utilize a campfire when surviving the elements:

- **Protection against wild animals.** If you find yourself in bear or wolf country, build a large fire and keep it going all night. Even the largest predators typically want nothing to do with humans, and fires and humans go hand and hand. Also, maintaining a fire will keep smaller critters away like raccoons, possums, and snakes.
- **Beacon or signal fires.** Unless you plan on staying in the woods and living off the land, your goal is to get found as soon as possible. Keeping a fire going will help search crews find you that much quicker.
- **Drying clothes.** Hypothermia is no joke. If you fall in a river or get stuck in the rain make every effort to get dry and warm fast. Build a large fire and huddle close. Use sticks to hang your clothes and shoes to speed up the drying process.

Extinguishing Your Campfire

After you've enjoyed the warmth of a campfire you built with your own hands and used its heat to cook a tasty meal, it's time to extinguish. You'll need a bucket of water and a sturdy stick.

Here's the process:

- 1. Start sprinkling water onto the fire — don't dump the water.** Use just enough water to extinguish the fire but not so much that you flood the fire pit. Flooding a fire pit is unnecessary and will only make starting your next fire more difficult.
- 2. As you sprinkle water, use a stick to stir the coals.** Stirring helps water cover every part of the fire to put it out thoroughly.

3. Hover your hand over the coals to feel for heat. If you feel any heat whatsoever, you need to continue sprinkling water and stirring. Only when the bed of coals is completely cool to the touch is the fire extinguished.

Now that you know how to build a campfire for any situation, go ahead — head off into the woods. And if you can't escape the city, set up in your backyard and stoke some logs just for the heck of it.

How to Plan a Canoe Trip: A Beginner's Guide

This article was also featured on GuyCounseling.com. The client wanted an article that introduced beginners to the prospect of canoe camping and everything that's involved in planning a successful trip. The live article can be viewed at this link:

<http://www.guycounseling.com/canoe-camping-trip-planning/>

If you've ever dreamed of gliding down a forest-lined stream for days on end with no agenda beyond the nightly ritual of setting camp and whipping up a hearty meal, it's time to start planning a canoe camping trip.

Although canoes are the simplest of watercraft, taking a multi-day excursion in one can be surprisingly complicated and involved. New skills must be learned, specialized gear acquired, and local knowledge of waterways obtained. But once you sort out all the logistics, the rewards of time spent on the water immersed in nature are worth the effort.

Entire books have been written on the subject of canoe camping, but to help you get started, this article gives an introduction to all the steps involved in planning your canoe trip.

The first step – before you spend any money on gear – is deciding where to go...

Choosing a Canoe Camping Location

One of the most appealing benefits of a light and nimble canoe is that it can be launched practically anywhere – no boat launch required. No matter where you live, chances are there's a body of water close to home that's ideal for canoeing.

In terms of performance, canoes are extremely versatile and the type of water you can paddle is only limited by your skill level. For that reason, if you're new to canoeing, it's best to start small when choosing a canoe camping location. Sticking to stillwater – lakes and reservoirs – is a good idea to learn the ropes and build confidence in your paddling skills. Small, slow moving rivers also make excellent beginner-friendly canoe camping routes.

Since you're planning a camping trip, not just a day paddle, it's important to find a lake or river where camping is allowed. Unless you plan on heading out into remote wilderness, plan on camping at established campsites, either at State Parks or other types of public land. It's likely that if a body of water is worth canoeing, other paddlers have gone before you and the best campsites will be easy to identify.

So how do you find a good lake or river for a canoe camping trip?

Open Google Maps and look for the blue blobs and squiggly blue lines. Seriously, a ton of scouting can be accomplished from the comfort of your iPhone. Make note of any chains of lakes, reservoirs, or rivers within National Forests, National Wildlife Refuges, or State Parks.

If you live in an area with a decent concentration of canoe camping areas, there's a good chance that guidebooks are available. An up-to-date, well-written guidebook for your area can make finding a suitable location much easier.

The Logistics of Canoe Camping: Preparing for Your Trip

Canoe camping takes a healthy dose of dedication. You'll likely spend more time and energy planning your trip, at least when you're just getting started, as you spend on the actual trip. But there is one thing you can do all throughout the process to save time and help you get on the water faster — talk to people in the know.

Talk to the Right People

It's true that canoeists value their solitude. But most of them also like to talk at length about their favorite hobby. So when you're just starting out, don't be shy about heading to your local sporting goods or canoe shop to ask some questions.

Talk to local paddlers and tell them your ideas about where you want to go canoe camping, or "canoe touring," as they say. Soak in the priceless tips they offer about the best places to launch, the best places to camp, and any other hard-earned wisdom they feel generous enough to share.

When you're ready to start gearing up for your canoe trip, forming a relationship with a local specialty sporting goods shop staffed by canoeists and kayakers is one of the best moves you can make. While these smaller establishments can't always beat big box prices, you'll likely save significantly in the long run by buying the right gear the first time based on expert advice.

Arranging a Shuttle

If you plan on canoe camping on a lake, it will likely be a round-trip journey, starting and ending at the same launch point. But if you decide to float down a river over the course of a few days, you'll need to arrange for a shuttle.

A shuttle will get you and your canoe from your ending point back to your car at the starting point to go home. This is most easily accomplished when two people, each with their own car, go on a canoe trip together. One car is parked at the end of the route; the other is used to drive to the

launching point to begin the trip. Then, at the end of the trip, one car is used to drive back to retrieve the other car from the launch point.

Arranging a shuttle is one of the biggest logistical matters to address when planning a canoe trip – there's just no way around it. However, if you don't want to deal with the hassle, it's possible in some areas to hire an outfitter to provide a shuttle service for you and your group. You'll have to call around to find out who offers this service, but the convenience of it could be worth the effort.

Learn How to Paddle

Traveling in a canoe seems easy enough: point the bow downstream and use your paddle to steer clear of rocks and snags. But as it turns out, there's a whole skill set required to successfully maneuver a canoe in different water conditions.

On stillwater, the basic canoe strokes and maneuvers are all you really need. If you plan on touring rivers, however, you'll need to learn how to read current and react accordingly. There are many ways to learn these skills including online videos, books, and in-person classes from groups such as American Canoe Association.

http://www.americancanoe.org/events/event_list.asp?show=&group=&start=3%2F15%2F2011&end=&view=&cid=3912

What's most important is that you actually take the time to learn how to paddle your canoe before setting off on your trip. Once you get your hands on a canoe, head down to a local pond or lake and put in some hours getting comfortable with the basics.

Do Your Homework

The time leading up to your trip should be spent intently studying the water and surrounding landscape you plan on canoeing. It's the time to gather maps and books as well as read through any blog or forum posts from others who've done similar trips.

Try to find out the best time of year to go, safe water levels, tips on where to launch, where to camp, information on portages, and other logistical information. For a more enhanced experience, take some time to learn about the flora and fauna you might encounter.

Perhaps the most important piece of homework you'll need to do before your trip is to find out the regulations affecting the area you plan on canoeing. Call the local authorities – Parks and Recreation departments, Wildlife and Fisheries agencies, BLM agencies, forest rangers, etc. – and tell them you're planning a canoe camping trip in their area. Ask them to tell you everything you need to know and all the rules you need to follow.

Although you can often find this regulatory information on agency websites, calling or visiting in person is the best way to get the most up-to-date information. Plus, they might have some key tips to make your trip even better.

Make a Safety Plan and Stick to It

When proper measures are taken, canoeing is generally a safe activity. But when you're in the wilderness, accidents can occur. No matter how short or long your trip, you need to have a plan in place so that if something happens, you, and perhaps more importantly, others who can help are ready.

A basic safety plan, (called a float plan in canoe lingo) includes letting someone you trust know exactly where you'll be canoeing and for how long. They'll know that if they don't hear from you for a certain amount of time that something happened and they need to alert the authorities.

For more in-depth information on creating a float plan, check out this article from Paddling.com.

<https://paddling.com/learn/the-float-plan-a-vital-paddling-tool/>

Essential Canoe Camping Gear

Now for the fun part: getting the gear.

Just as planning the logistics of a canoe camping trip is very involved, the list of canoe camping gear is surprisingly extensive. Keep in mind that your gear selections should be made based on factors such as the duration of the trip, weather, and desired comfort levels. Still, for a successful canoe camping trip, there is a whole host of things you can't leave shore without.

The good news, however, is that canoes can carry heavy loads – anywhere from 800 to 1,200 pounds. So you won't have to count ounces to the extent you would if you were backpacking. But don't go crazy – especially if you have several portages on your trip.

We'll start our list of gear with the most important item of all: the canoe.

The Canoe – Rent or Buy

We won't go into detail about which specific canoe to buy here. There are literally thousands of models on the market, each with pros and cons. Instead, let's look at a common query among first-time canoe campers: should you rent or buy a canoe?

Renting a Canoe

If you want to test the waters of the canoe camping life but aren't ready to throw down serious cash on a vessel of your own, it's a great idea to rent a canoe for your first trip or two.

If you're planning a trip in a popular canoe area, you can almost always count on there being canoe outfitters you can rent from for as many days as you'd like. They might even offer a shuttle service.

Plan on a canoe rental costing up to \$50 or \$60 per day, with discounts when you rent multiple canoes.

Buying a Canoe

A good canoe is something that always comes in handy. Although they can get expensive, if you make the investment, you'll likely find yourself spending a lot more time peacefully floating around local ponds and taking canoe trips whenever you have a couple free days to burn.

If well cared for, canoes hold their value well. This is good news if you plan on selling your canoe in the future, but is also a negative if you're trying to get a good deal on a used canoe. However, if you aren't in a hurry and know how to spot a good deal, you should be able to find a high quality used canoe for a decent price.

Whether you plan on buying new or used, try to test paddle as many different canoes as you can before purchasing. Many canoe shops hold demo days on local lakes when customers are invited to come and try their merchandise. You may be inclined to research hull shapes, but ultimately it comes down to how the canoe feels in the water.

Canoe-Related Items

In addition to the canoe, you'll also need the following items in order to safely paddle:

- **Paddles** – One per person plus an extra.
- **PFDs (Personal Flotation Devices)** – One per person plus an extra.
- **Helmet** – A good idea if you plan on floating rough water.
- **Canoe seats**
- **Yoke pads for portages** – These attach to the yoke of the canoe for more comfort on long portages.
- **Spray covers** – These go over the open top of the canoe to protect your gear from moisture.
- **Bailer or Bilge pump** – Used to remove accumulated water from inside the canoe.

Camping Gear

Once you land at camp for the day, canoe camping is just like any other type of camping. Pitch a tent, build a fire, cook dinner, and sleep. Here's what you'll need:

- **Tent or shelter**

- **Sleeping bag**
- **Sleeping pad**
- **Lanterns**
- **Flashlights**
- **Headlamps**
- **Lighters and other fire starting implements** — Tinder, kindling, fuel wood if necessary.

Your Camp Kitchen

One of the major perks of the high weight capacity of a canoe is that you aren't limited to using lightweight kitchen tools like you are when backpacking. That said, the kitchen tools you bring should be based on the type of food you plan on cooking. If chili straight out of the can is what you're serving for every meal, all you'll need is a can opener and some spoons. But, if you want more options, here's a good starting list of kitchen implements to bring along:

- **Camp stove** — Either a backpacking-style or one or two burner tailgating-style propane stove.
- **A set of nesting pots** with pot gripper
- **Folding grill** if campfires are permitted
- **Plates, mugs, and bowls** — Ideally unbreakable plastic or enameled steel.
- **Utensils** — Plastic spatula, stirring spoon or ladle, forks, spoons, knives, and chef's knife.
- **Fillet knife** — If you plan on eating fish you catch.
- **Small cutting board**
- **Can opener**
- **Aluminum foil**
- **Coffee maker** — Either a stovetop espresso maker, pour over drip cone, or a pot to make cowboy coffee.
- **Water bottles** — One for each person.
- **Water purifier**
- **Hand towels** — Or paper towels (but don't litter!)
- **Cooler with ice**

When it comes to the food you bring, get creative! Without much of a weight restriction and all the cooking tools you could need, you can cook just like you're at home. Canned items always make for easy meals, and don't forget to bring sandwich making supplies. No camper ever complained about a stack of beef jerky (unless they're vegetarian, that is) and salamis and hard cheeses make an excellent riverside snack.

Clothing

The clothing you wear on your canoe trip should be chosen based on the season and the weather. The best advice is to come equipped with plenty of layers as temperatures can fluctuate wildly throughout the day when you're on the water.

Here's a basic packing list to be prepared for a wide range of conditions:

- **Good footwear** — Hard-soled sandals like Chacos, Tevas, or Keens; hiking boots are nice to have if you have long portages over rough terrain.
- **Rain gear** — Parka and rain pants if necessary.
- **Moisture-wicking T-shirts**
- **Sun-protection long sleeve shirts**
- **Merino wool base layer** — If canoeing in cold weather.
- **Fleece mid layer**
- **Sweatshirt or lightweight puffy jacket**
- **Shorts**
- **Bathing suit**
- **Long pants** — Or convertible pants.
- **Hat**
- **Bandana, buff, or balaclava**

Other Canoe Camping Necessities

- **Paper maps** — As a backup even if you have a GPS unit.
- **Compass**
- **Insect repellent**
- **Sunscreen**
- **First aid kit**
- **Paracord** — At least 50 feet, this stuff comes in handy for everything.
- **Toilet paper**
- **Hand sanitizer**

Where and How to Stow All Your Gear

Completing a successful canoe camping trip lies in your ability to get you and all your stuff down the river or across the lake dry and in one piece. To do this, dry bags are your best friend.

Dry bags are specialized bags made of waterproof material that feature a roll top closure. They come in a wide range of sizes and colors and fit snugly in the bottom of a canoe. Basically, if you're on the water, anything you don't want to lose to the river should be stowed away in a dry bag.

If you're planning a trip that involves portaging, you should also invest in a portage bag. A portage bag is a large, wide bag with backpack straps that's used to carry all your dry bags while portaging your canoe. While they aren't practical for use as a normal backpack, they're ideal for carrying a lot of weight over a short distance.

To keep all your gear inside your canoe while paddling, rope and webbing are used to hold everything in. Specialized webbing products are available, but standard nylon rope or paracord works just fine.

Final Preparations for Canoe Camping

After you've decided where to go, done your homework, and gathered up all the gear you need, you're ready to countdown the days until your trip! But there's one final thing to do before it's time to shove off — make sure you know how to set up, use, and repair all your gear.

Set up your tent in the backyard, make sure your sleeping pad inflates properly, test your camp stove. Practice lashing down your gear in the canoe so that when you're on the water you won't have any surprises. Look for any items that could potentially break — headlamps are notorious breakers — and ensure that you have either a backup or the tools to fix it.

Ready to start planning a canoe camping trip? If so, you certainly have your work cut out for you... And we hope you enjoy every second of it!

Information & Entertainment Articles

The Biggest Largemouth Bass Ever Caught

This article was written for Huk Performance Fishing to be featured on their blog. The client wanted an article that told the story of the two current world records for largemouth bass, followed by some fishing tips to help anglers catch their own big bass. The live post can be viewed at this link: <https://www.hukgear.com/pages/biggest-largemouth-bass-ever-caught>

Despite the popularity of bass fishing, world record catches are surprisingly infrequent. You'd think with all the professional tournament anglers and weekend warriors pounding the water, a new record-breaking bass would turn up every few years or so. But that's not the case.

In fact, the official IGFA all-tackle record for biggest largemouth bass has been held for over 80 years. Only in the last decade has the record been challenged.

As with most fish tales, the story behind the world record bass isn't so straightforward. To start unwinding this yarn, allow us to introduce you to a Great Depression-era farmer named George Perry...

Official Largemouth World Record: George Perry's Undefeated Bass

On June 2nd, 1932, George Perry caught the current world record bass out of Lake Montgomery, an oxbow lake off the Ocmulgee River in southern Georgia. The fish weighed 22 pounds, 4 ounces.

At that time, world records for fish didn't exist. Mr. Perry certainly wasn't a sport angler by today's definition and pursuing a record was nowhere on his radar. He and a buddy simply went down to the lake to put some meat on the table. After catching and landing the beast with a creek chub fintail shiner lure, they drove home, stopping to weigh the fish at the local post office. The fish fed Mr. Perry's family of six for two consecutive dinners.

Since the IGFA had yet to be formed and no other agencies were keeping official world records for fish at the time, Mr. Perry's catch almost slipped through the cracks. Luckily, Mr. Perry was told about a big fish contest Field & Stream magazine was running and he entered the fish. Although he had no photograph to accompany the submission, the measurements and weight of his

remarkable fish were enough to win the contest. His prize was an assortment of clothing and a shotgun with some shells. But most importantly, the fish was documented in print — claiming its rightful place in history.

Two years later, Field & Stream began officially certifying world records. When it came time to fill the largemouth bass slot, they entered Mr. Perry's contest-winning fish. It was the biggest bass they've ever heard of by a long shot. Coincidentally, Mr. Perry won the same big fish contest again that year with a 13 pound 14-ounce bass. Some people are just born fishy...

Technically, Mr. Perry's bass is still the world record holder. In 2009, however, a Japanese angler stamped his name in the books alongside Perry's with a mega-bass of his own.

Tied World Record Largemouth Bass: Manabu Kurita 22.5 lb

Although some of the best bass fishing tackle hails from Japan — Shimano, Gamakatsu, and Daiwa among others — the country isn't thought of as a monster bass hotspot.

Since largemouth bass are non-native, the Japanese government considers them a nuisance, actively carrying out plans to exterminate the species. Still, there are enough bass to sustain a niche group of hardcore bass fanatics, including Manabu Kurita — the only man to have ever tied Mr. Perry's undefeated world record bass.

Kurita caught his record bass in Lake Biwa and the catch was confirmed as legitimate through a polygraph test. Weighing 22 pounds, 5 ounces, the bass actually surpasses Mr. Perry's 1932 record bass, but IGFA regulations require that the new record outweighs the current record by more than two ounces. So, it's a tie.

Now the question is, who will step up and establish the new world record largemouth?

Catch Your Own Record Setter

It's unknown whether or not a largemouth bass can naturally grow beyond the 22-pound mark. But that doesn't mean you should stop trying to hook into a record breaker. If you want to move beyond frying pan-sized bass, here are a few tips to help:

1. Change Your Mindset to Target Trophies

Catching trophy-class bass is an entirely different game than catching schoolies. The truth is, if you want to catch bass in the 10-pound-plus range, you have to come to terms with the fact that you aren't going to catch very many, if any fish on a regular basis.

Fish slowly and methodically. Don't get phased if you come back to shore without any action. Your persistence and discipline will pay off.

2. Up-Size Your Lures

The adage "bigger baits catch bigger fish" holds true when chasing the biggest largemouth. These old fish don't feed all day long like smaller bass do. Instead, they wait for a nice big meal to swim along. They're looking for the biggest payoff for the least amount of energy exerted. Don't be afraid to go big.

3. Seek Out Areas with Low Fishing Pressure

Big bass are survivors. They've successfully eluded the pressures of larger predators in their early days and have outwitted anglers as they've grown.

Your odds of catching a potential record setter will skyrocket if you can find locations with the least amount of angling pressure possible. Often times the best spots will be where other anglers can't or won't make the effort to reach. Find the thickest, nastiest side-channels or bays, suck it up, and get in there.

Gear Up for the Fight

One of the keys to success when pursuing record-size bass is being able to stay on the water all day long. You need the right gear to stay comfortable no matter what the weather's doing.

Springtime is typically best for catching big bass since the spawning ritual makes the fish vulnerable to mistakes. But fishing in spring also means you'll be subjecting yourself to long days under the sun along with rising humidity levels.

The Huk Icon Longsleeve shirt is the easiest way to stay protected from the sun and as dry as possible when chasing that world-record toad. It's made of durable poly knit fabric that wicks moisture and features a lower back mesh vent for extra cooling.

To give you an extra advantage, the Icon is available in Kryptek camouflage which helps break up your outline above water to minimize the risk of being spotted by fish. After all, if you want a shot at the world record, or even a state record, you need all the help you can get.

9 Adventurous Things to Do While Camping

This article was written for TheOutdoorsPro.com, a blog focusing on camping, hiking, and survival. The client wanted an article geared towards families with children, providing fun ideas for camp activities. The live post can be viewed at this link:

<http://www.theoutdoorspro.com/9-things-to-do-while-camping/>

The tent is pitched, the fire's rolling... now what? For many, simply being in nature is plenty, but for others — especially those with little ones to entertain — having a lineup of camping activities ready to go can make any trip more enjoyable for everyone involved. Whether you want to get up close and personal with nature, get a little goofy around the campfire, or take part in some outdoor classics, this article will give you a boost of good ideas for things to do on your next camping trip.

For Kids and Families

Wilderness Scavenger Hunt

The natural world is remarkable from a distance. But it gets even better when you zoom in and explore the intricacies and nuances that often go unnoticed. Organizing a wilderness scavenger hunt is a great way for your kids to start exploring and discovering nature and all the little things that make wild places so special. All you need is some paper, something to write with, and some willing participants.

The nice thing about scavenger hunts is that they're highly adaptable and you can do them wherever you happen to be camping. Simply write down as many natural items you can think of that can be found in and around your campsite. Leaves, rocks, berries, bark from a certain tree, a worm, a beetle, and on and on. Get creative. A heart-shaped rock? Maybe a forked stick for a slingshot?

Side note: This is also a good time to explain what should go in one's mouth and what should not.

Then, invent a prize or reward and send your campers off to hunt for the items on the list. The first one to collect all the items wins.

If you need help creating your list of scavenger hunt items, check out this article by Love the Outdoors. They also mention some interesting "experiential" scavenger hunt ideas. Think "free natural history museum."

<http://www.lovetheoutdoors.com/camping/kids/scavengerhunt.htm>

Camping Charades

Playing charades is always good fun and it's even better with an outdoorsy twist around a campfire. For detailed instructions on how get a game of charades going, the National Park Service put together a quick guide to help you get started.

<https://www.nps.gov/articles/campingcharades.htm>

Go Primitive Fishing

All throughout the U.S., there are some top-notch camping opportunities on beautiful lakes and rivers, most of which are loaded with fish. Fishing is one of the best ways to spend an afternoon in the wilderness, and fortunately, you don't need an arsenal of expensive fishing gear to catch a few fish. In fact, making your own fishing rod and doing some primitive fishing adds a whole new level of engagement to the activity and is something in which the entire family can participate.

You'll need some basic fishing gear — line, hooks, and sinkers. These items can be purchased at sporting goods stores and some hardware stores. Learning how to tie a basic clinch knot will help too. Then, all you need is a good stick and some bait.

You can build a cane-pole style fishing rod in about 5 minutes — it's nothing more than some line tied to a stick. The type of stick traditionally used is river cane, but bamboo works just as well. If there's no cane or bamboo to be found, any old stick around 6- to 8-feet long will do. Tie on a length of line slightly longer than the stick, tie a hook to the line, pinch on a split shot about 12 inches above the hook and you're ready to go. If you have a bobber, use it. If not, don't worry about it. For a more detailed explanation of the process, this Field and Stream article will help.

<http://www.fieldandstream.com/articles/fishing/bass-fishing/2010/09/how-build-bamboo-cane-fishing-pole>

Kids may find that collecting bait is more fun than the actual fishing. Worms, crickets, and grasshoppers will catch just about anything that swims. Send your kids off with a container and have them dig up some worms or catch some hoppers.

Thread the bait onto the hook, dunk it in the water, and wait. You might be surprised by what you catch. Even if you don't catch anything, the entire process will keep everyone busy and entertained for quite a while.

For Contemplative Spirits

Bird and Wildlife Viewing

Pick up a copy of the "Peterson Field Guide to Birds of North America," or the "Peterson Field Guide to Mammals of North America" and see how many different species you can identify. This is something that anyone can enjoy, especially those fascinated by the natural world.

Star Gaze

It's amazing how many stars you can see when you get away from light-polluted cities. Just seeing the stars is rewarding in and of itself, but if you want to get a bit more involved, get a copy of the "National Geographic Backyard Guide to the Night Sky" by Howard Schneider, and prepare to be amazed. The book helps you identify stars, planets, and constellations with easy-to-read sky maps, and gives seasonal information about different astral events. Who knows? You might be stargazing just in time to see a meteor shower or a comet.

It can be difficult to see the stars in detail when you're sitting next to a fire, so you may have to wait until after you put out the fire to start your stargazing session. Or, you can take a stroll through the woods to find a nice clearing. Bring a blanket, a friend, perhaps a beverage, and take in the beautiful night sky.

Photography

Exploring the woods with a camera is fun in the moment, but also gives you something to remember your trip long after it's over. You don't need to rush out and buy a brand new DSLR camera to take some beautiful nature photos; the camera on your smartphone is plenty to get started.

Be willing to get creative with your shots. Get up close, find interesting textures, and play with the shadows. You can slip in a selfie here and there, but taking an artistic approach often results in a more enriching experience and photos you can be proud of.

All-Time Classics

Skip Rocks

Rock. Water. Throw rock into water. Throw rock *across* the water. Ahhh. There is something so inherently satisfying in successfully skipping a rock.

Don't know how to skip a rock? Watch this. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LepEw8C_g9k

Whittle a Stick

Whittling a stick is one of the most classic forms of campfire entertainment. All you need is a pocket knife, a stick, and a campfire to sit around.

Whittling is the most basic form of wood carving. Most campfire whittlers will simply sharpen the end of a stick. Why? Just because. If you get it fine enough, you've just created a toothpick. More advanced whittlers can create all sorts of shapes. Either way, if you have a knife and you're near a campfire, try your hand at whittling.

For Dinner Time

Creative Campfire Cooking

Cooking over an open fire is immensely satisfying. There is a whole host of methods for cooking over fire, some involve grill tops, dutch ovens, or you can just stab a hunk of meat on a stick and roast away. But, one of the most delicious methods involves a humble roll of aluminum foil.

Basically, you can stick any combination of ingredients into an aluminum foil pouch, place the pouch carefully on or in the fire, let it cook, and see how it turns out. The fun part is getting creative and coming up with delicious, on-the-spot combinations.

Not sure what ingredients to bring with you? Browse through the different foil-wrapped recipes in this excellent article.

<http://hickcountry.com/top-lists/18-simple-tasty-tin-foil-camping-recipes/>

When's Your Next Camping Trip?

The more you get outdoors, the better — even if you can only get away for one night. And when you take that next trip and aren't sure what to do, remember these ideas for things to do while camping! A little adventure, exploration, and good ole fashion rock-skipping fun can make any camping trip one to remember.

Fly Lines 101

This article was written for OutdoorEmpire.com, a fishing, hunting, and shooting blog. The client wanted an article providing an introduction to fly lines and how to choose the right line for specific uses. The live article can be viewed at this link: <https://outdoorempire.com/fly-line-basics/>

Without the proper fly line, a fly rod is practically useless. But when perfectly paired with a line of the right weight and taper, a fly rod comes alive in the hand and casting feels almost effortless.

The problem, however, is that if you're new to the sport of fly fishing, choosing the right fly line can be a very frustrating task — especially if you get it wrong. Your casting will suffer, your fly will flop, and the fish will spook.

So, to help you along in your fly fishing journey, this article introduces you to the basics of fly lines — how they're constructed, the different styles available, the concept of tapers, and how to choose the proper line weight to match your rod. Once you've digested this information, you'll be able to decode the label of a fly line box and know with confidence if it's the right fly line for you.

Let's get started...

What Does A Fly Line Need to Do?

With conventional fishing tackle (spinning and baitcasting), the weight of the lure, bait, or sinker is used to cast a nearly weightless line, but in fly fishing, the exact opposite is true: the weight of the line is used to cast the fly.

Think of a fly line as a "fly delivery system."

Fly Line Construction

Fly lines are comprised of two basic components: the core and the coating.

The Core

The core acts as the backbone of the fly line, providing the strength necessary to play and reel in a fish.

Fly lines intended for use in coldwater fishing typically have cores made of braided nylon material that stays soft and supple in cold temperatures. Fly lines designed for use in warmer conditions (bonefish in the Bahamas anyone?) often have cores made of monofilament material that remains stiffer in higher temperatures for better casting performance.

Most fly lines for trout and bass fishing have core strengths of around 20-pound test. Saltwater fly lines and lines intended for larger fish species typically have core strengths of around 30-pound test but can go as high as 60- or 80-pound test for big game fishing.

The Coating

The coating gives a fly line its unique thicker-than-normal-fishing-line look and feel. Modern fly lines are coated with synthetic materials like polyurethane, vinyl, and PVC that not only help the line slide through the rod guides, but give the line its unique action in the water. A fly line's taper and weight are also determined by the specific coating used and how it's applied.

Basic Fly Line Types

Floating Fly Lines

Floating fly lines are by far the most versatile and popular type of fly line. As their name implies, floating lines float on or near the water's surface. This floating action is the result of tiny air bubbles trapped within the fly line coating.

Since they can be adapted for use in nearly any fishing situation and are typically the easiest type of fly line to cast, many fly anglers who fish both freshwater and saltwater use only a floating line.

If you're just starting out, a floating line is the way to go.

Sinking Fly Lines

While floating lines use air bubbles in their coating for buoyancy, sinking lines use heavy materials such as metals or minerals to cause the line to sink. You'll often hear sinking lines referred to as "full sinking lines" and are available in a wide variety of sink rates given in inches per second (IPS).

Anglers use sinking lines when it's necessary to get a fly down deep in the water like when fishing lakes for trout, large rivers for salmon, or from jetties for striped bass.

Sink Tip Fly Lines

This hybridized type of fly line is essentially a floating line with a 20- to 30-foot length of sinking line at the front.

With a sink tip line, the majority of the line remains floating on the surface while only the tip sinks. This action can help you stay clear of snags and the bottom structure of a river. Sink tip lines are favored by anglers who fish subsurface flies like nymphs and streamers.

Fly Line Tapers

Though often a source of major confusion and heated debate, the taper of a fly line simply describes the shape and gauge of the line from end to end.

The main purpose of a taper is to increase the efficiency of the fly cast. The most basic fly line taper is thin at the back end of the line and thicker at the front end, gradually increasing in thickness until the front end of the line is heavier than the back end. With the weight distributed in this manner, the increased weight at the front end of the line helps bend and load the rod with energy, which can then be transferred back to the line through the casting stroke in order to launch the line through the air.

The fly line taper you choose should be primarily based on the fishing techniques you intend to perform and the water and wind conditions with which you must cope. Certain tapers work better for casting dry flies, some make it easier to perform specific fly casts, and others make it possible to cast head-on into the wind.

Here are three of the most common fly line tapers explained.

Weight Forward

Fly lines with a weight forward taper are the most popular and easiest to cast variety. You'll find almost every type of fly line — floating, sinking, intermediate, and sink tip — available in a weight forward taper.

With a weight forward taper, most of the line's weight is positioned in the front 20 or 30 feet of the line. This front-heavy design allows for very efficient casting, using the weight in the head to carry the rest of the line forward — similar to how a weighted lure on a spinning rod carries the line when cast.

Weight forward lines can be used for a huge variety of fishing scenarios and are especially beneficial for new fly anglers learning how to cast. If you're not sure which taper to choose, a weight forward line is a great place to start.

Double Taper

A double taper line has weight both in the front and back portion of the line, with each end tapering toward a slimmer middle. The result is a line with more overall mass throughout its

entire length than a weight forward line. This is beneficial when performing certain fly casts and maneuvers such as the roll cast and the upstream mend.

Shooting Head Tapers

A shooting head taper is like a condensed version of a weight forward taper. Instead of going from thin to thick in a gradual way, shooting head lines have a much more aggressive taper with the front 10 to 15 feet of line being very thick and heavy while the rest of the line is relatively thin.

You should consider using a shooting head line if you regularly fish in conditions with strong winds as the heavier head section helps the line penetrate the wind. Shooting head lines are also helpful when you need to make extremely long, accurate casts, as when saltwater flats fishing.

Fly Line Weights Explained

For a fly rod to successfully cast a fly line, the line must have enough mass to flex the rod sufficiently during the casting stroke. If the line is not heavy enough, the rod won't flex and there won't be enough stored energy to make a successful cast. If the line is too heavy, it can bend the rod too much, which in turn slows down the rod's rebound, resulting in slower line speed and less casting distance.

All fly rods are designed for use with a specific line weight. The good news is it's usually printed on the rod blank near the grip. Simply purchase a fly line that matches the weight on the fly rod and you're good to go.

You'll find fly lines ranging in weights from 0 all the way up to 16. Line sizes 3 through 7 are the most common sizes for freshwater fishing, while sizes 8 through 12 are most common for saltwater fishing.

Unlike conventional fishing rods and reels that allow you to use different line strengths on the same outfits, fly rods are line weight specific. While you can use a 5-weight line on a 4-weight rod, it won't perform as well as the proper match. For this reason, it's critical that you take time to assess your needs before buying your rod so you have the right rod and line to handle the fish you're after.

Choosing the Best Fly Line For You

Fly fishing is a very personalized sport. Every piece of gear you buy should be determined entirely by your unique fishing style, the water you fish, and the species you chase. This is especially true when selecting a fly line.

Before you decide on which fly line to buy, use the information presented in this article to help you figure out what style of fly line will suit you best — floating, sinking, or sink tip. Then, consider

whether a standard weight forward line will suffice or if you need something more specialized like a double taper or a shooting head. Take a look at the markings on your rod blank to determine the line size you need and you'll be casting and fishing a well-balanced rod, reel, and line in no time.

Fly Leaders Made Simple

This article was also written for OutdoorEmpire.com as part of a series on fly fishing basics. The live post can be viewed at this link: <https://outdoorempire.com/fly-leaders-made-simple/>

Fly fishing is all about stealth. If your fly lands on the water with only a hint of a ripple and drifts downstream free of drag, there's a good chance an unsuspecting fish will mistake your artificial for the real thing. But how is it possible to achieve a stealthy presentation with a fly line that is brightly colored, heavy, and prone to splashdown landings?

Enter the leader.

The Purpose of a Fly Leader

A fly leader is the clear fishing line, often monofilament, that connects your nearly weightless fly to your heavy fly line. While a fly leader is essential for a delicate fly presentation, it's even more critical for executing proper fly casting mechanics.

For a fly to hit its target, energy stored in the fly line must be transferred to the tip of the leader. Since a fly leader is tapered from thick to thin, it allows the energy to move through and unfurl the fly line as it straightens, propelling the fly towards its target.

Basic Parts of a Fly Leader

Butt Section

The butt section is where the leader attaches to the fly line and is the thickest portion of the leader. For most fly leaders, the butt section ranges from 12 inches to over three feet long.

Middle or Tapered Section

After the butt section, the leader gradually becomes thinner until it reaches the thinnest point at the very end, the tippet. Sandwiched between the butt section and the tippet, the middle section is generally one-third the length of the entire leader but can vary depending on leader design, overall length, and severity of the taper.

Tippet

The last section of the leader is the tippet – the thinnest segment of line to which the fly is tied. The tippet can be as short as six inches or as long as three or four feet depending on how you're fishing.

The tippet is generally softer and more supple than the butt and middle sections, giving your fly the freedom to move in the water with the least amount of drag.

During a typical day of fishing, the tippet section of a leader gets shorter and shorter as it's snipped to change flies. To keep from having to change out the entire leader when the tippet gets too short, carry extra spools to replace the cut-off and re-tied portions.

Basic Fly Leader Types

Knotless Tapered - The Most Common

The vast majority of leaders used by fly anglers are knotless tapered leaders. These fly fishing specialty items are made of a single strand of monofilament line that is extruded from a machine which imparts the proper taper to the leader complete with butt, middle, and tippet sections.

Knotless tapered leaders come in many different strengths, lengths, and tapers to catch nearly any fish species from mountain stream brook trout to fly-crushing salt marsh redfish.

Anglers favor knotless tapered leaders over other varieties for their simplicity and ease of use. All you have to do is open the package, attach the leader to your fly line, tie your fly to the tippet and you're ready to fish.

Most knotless tapered fly leaders even come with a loop tied in the butt end which allows you to attach the leader to your fly line with a simple loop-to-loop connection instead of fussing with knots.

Knotted Tapered

Knotted tapered leaders are just like knotless tapered leaders, except instead of being made from a single piece of continuously tapered monofilament, they are made with a series of monofilament sections of different sizes and strengths that are knotted together to form a taper.

If you want to fish with knotted tapered leaders, you pretty much have to tie them yourself as they aren't commonly sold in fly shops. While it takes extra effort to tie your own knotted leaders, you have complete control over the length, strength, and the proportions of the taper. It takes lots of trial and error to figure out the best proportions to use so that your knotted leader casts well, which is why most anglers opt for readily available knotless tapered leaders.

Leader Materials

Monofilament

The majority of knotless tapered leaders on the market are made of nylon monofilament. This material is relatively inexpensive, very durable, and is available in a wide range of sizes.

Nylon monofilament, mono for short, is slightly less dense than water which causes it to float or at least remain neutrally buoyant. It's also slightly porous, and while it does absorb some water which may seem like a bad thing, keeps the line soft, supple, and flexible which is helpful in making a natural fly presentation.

Monofilament also has high elasticity, meaning it both stretches and recoils. A monofilament leader acts like a shock absorber at the end of the line, providing a cushion when setting the hook on a fish to minimize the line snapping upon impact.

Fluorocarbon

Knotless tapered leaders are also available in fluorocarbon, which is much denser and harder than nylon monofilament. The increased density gives fluorocarbon greater durability, especially in terms of abrasion resistance, which is why many saltwater anglers choose fluorocarbon when fishing over line-cutting coral reefs and other structure.

The higher density of fluorocarbon also makes it less elastic than nylon monofilament. With less stretch and recoil, fluorocarbon is often touted as providing a better "feel" of the line, the fly, and the fish. It's also thought to provide better hook setting power, as less stretch results in a better transfer of energy when striking.

Lastly, fluorocarbon is less visible in the water than monofilament. Some say it "disappears" in the water, but this is mostly just wishful thinking. Fish have great underwater eyesight and can still see fluorocarbon, just slightly less so than monofilament.

Leader Strength

Fly leaders come in a huge range of breaking strengths for both freshwater and saltwater fishing. But while the strength of standard fishing line is expressed in "pound-test," fly leaders and tippet are rated using an "X" system — 0X, 1X, 2X, 3X, and so on up to 8X.

The X system can seem a little confusing at first because the smaller the number, the stronger the leader. For example, a 2X leader is much stronger than a 6X leader.

Finally, the size of the leader marked on the label (3X, 4X, etc.) tells you the size of the tippet – the thinnest part of the line.

Most trout fishing is performed with leaders in 5X, 6X, and 7X sizes. For species like largemouth bass and northern pike, leaders in 2X and 3X might be better suited.

Most saltwater fly leaders, however, do in fact use a "pound-test" breaking strength system ranging from 8 pound-test up to 60 pound-test or more.

Leader Length

The length of a leader affects three main aspects of fly fishing: casting, fly presentation, and depth of the fly.

For most anglers, the longer the leader, the harder it is to cast. For optimal casting performance, it's widely held that the leader should be the same length as the rod. So, if you have a 9-foot fly rod, a 9-foot long leader is a perfect match. Of course, you may find that your particular 9-foot rod casts better with an 11-foot leader – experiment with different leader lengths to find what works best with your specific set up.

In terms of fly presentation, the longer the leader, the less likely you are to spook fish. A long leader keeps the fly further away from the heavy fly line and offers a more gentle water landing. However, it's typically more difficult to cast a long leader with accuracy. As with most things in fly fishing, there's a trade off.

The length of a leader also determines how deep a fly will sink, particularly when using a floating fly line. This can be used to your advantage if you find yourself in a situation where you need to get your fly down deep but don't have a sinking or sink tip line at your disposal. Add an extra three or four feet of tippet to your leader to gain some extra depth.

Making Your Leader Selection

Fly leaders can be very finicky, requiring much tweaking and tinkering until you find what works for you. If you're just starting out, keep things simple and use knotless tapered leaders in the appropriate strength for your quarry in a length equal to your rod.

Be sure to pick up a couple extra spools of tippet, one in the same size as your leader, and another the next size up in case you need to rebuild part of your leader's taper. Keep experimenting with different leader materials, strengths, and lengths until your casting feels good and your presentations are attracting fish.

Bananas on a Boat: Why Some Fishermen Think They're Bad Luck

This article was written for ReelPursuits.com, a fishing blog with a strong focus on saltwater and kayak fishing. The client wanted an entertaining post covering the myth that bananas on a boat are bad luck for fishing. The live article can be viewed here:

<https://www.reelpursuits.com/bananas-on-a-boat-bad-luck/>

Some fishermen believe you need to have luck on your side to catch your limit. Others argue that it's not luck at all but an angler's skill in reading water, finding fish, and choosing the right lure that's needed to be successful. However, when it comes to luck and fishing, nearly all anglers agree that bananas on a boat are bad luck.

To the non-angler, this may seem silly. Bananas? Really? You didn't catch any fish because someone brought a banana on your boat? But the rule of "no bananas on the boat" is strictly enforced, especially by guides and commercial fishermen who must catch fish to earn their living.

But why bananas? Why not apples? Or strawberries? While the belief that bananas on a boat are bad luck may seem sort of random, the myth does have historical roots that can back up the claim. There are many versions of the story, but the most common go like this...

The Trials and Tribulations of Boats and Bananas

Back in the early days of trade in the Caribbean, boats carrying full loads of bananas would speed from port of origin to destination as fast as possible. Bananas spoil quickly and need to be shipped without delay.

The crew aboard these banana boats would hang baited lines off the stern in an effort to troll for fish. The boats, however, were often travelling too fast for effective trolling and fish were seldom caught. Banana boats gained a reputation for being bad fishing vessels. But there's more to the story...

These same banana boats were often crafted with cheap materials and poor craftsmanship. They were top heavy and typically overpowered in order to ship the bananas speedily. Due to the low quality construction of these vessels, banana boats would often wreck and sink, leaving thousands of bananas floating on the surface. The bananas would then wash ashore, and the

sight of bananas floating in the sea became a sign of a sunken ship. But that's one root of the banana on a boat superstition...

The Dangers of Bananas on a Boat

The tropical regions in which bananas grow in South and Central America are home to many species of poisonous snakes and spiders. If a sailor brought a case of bananas on board, there was always the risk that snakes and spiders would be brought along for the ride. Bananas became associated with unwanted and potentially dangerous pests...

Then there are the physical properties of bananas, more specifically their peels. The effect of stepping on a banana peel is perhaps highly exaggerated in Saturday morning cartoons, but they are in fact, quite slippery. The decks of boats are slippery enough, especially when soaked with water and fish guts, so any extra slipping hazards are simply not needed. But there are still other faults fisherman find with banana peels...

Science or Superstition?

Some suspect that the oil from a banana's peel is actually a fish deterrent. There could be something to this, but further scientific research and testing needs to be conducted to prove that this isn't just fisherman superstition. However, it is known that bananas do cause other fruits near them to ripen quicker and spoil sooner, leading to another case against bananas on a boat — bananas spoil food.

These days, while most fisherman cast from skiffs, bass boats, or kayaks and not 18th-century wooden banana boats, the "no bananas on the boat" rule is carefully minded. Some captains take it as far as prohibiting any foods or products that have anything to do with bananas on their boats, including banana muffins, banana bread, even "banana boat" brand sunscreen.

Bananas on a Boat: Is It Worth the Risk?

Has the superstition been taken too far? Maybe. But we go fishing to catch fish, don't we? We need all the help we can get and we need luck to be on our side. You'll have to decide for yourself whether bananas on a boat are bad luck or not, but if you want to stay on the captain's good side and not get thrown overboard, it's best to leave your bananas at home.

Sport Fish Panama Island Lodge

This article was written for Huk Performance Fishing to provide information about one of their partners, Sport Fish Panama Island Lodge, and the world-class saltwater fishing they offer in the Gulf of Chiriqui. The live post can be viewed at this link:

<https://www.hukgear.com/pages/best-panama-sport-fishing>

After a quick run across open water, the famed Hannibal Bank seamount appears on the depth finder. The hum of the dual Suzuki 300's softens as the 33-foot catamaran — T.O.P. CAT — slows down, easing into position.

200 yards away, a flock of cackling seabirds hovers over a boiling slurry of fleeing baitfish and slicing fins.

It's prime fishing season in the Gulf of Chiriqui and the tuna bite is on.

The boat creeps within casting distance of the chaotic scene. You're handed a heavy-duty offshore rod rigged with a feisty live blue runner bridled to a thick-gauge circle hook.

You lob the bait into the center of the blitz. Within seconds, there's an explosion at the end of your line and the reel starts screaming. The rod bends deep into the grip as you lean into the fighting harness.

Fish on.

It's twenty minutes into the fight and you've tamed the torpedo-shaped beast. Line-ripping runs have given way to a dogged match of tug-of-war. Pump, reel, pump, reel. Every muscle in your body fires, your predatory instincts ignite, and the battle is won.

Looks like it's sashimi for dinner tonight. You earned every ounce of that sweet, succulent flesh.

Today was yellowfin tuna. Tomorrow, black marlin. The next day... maybe roosterfish, snapper, or blue-finned trevally. Who knows what will end up on your line in these waters.

You're in Panama, a true angler's paradise.

Welcome to the "Place of Many Fish"

The Gulf of Chiriqui along Panama's Pacific coast holds one of the most prolific saltwater fisheries in the world. A perfect combination of undersea structure, strong ocean currents, and nutrient-rich water within the Gulf create a fertile aquatic habitat that sustains a remarkable diversity of marine life – including 20 species of highly prized gamefish.

All year long, epic numbers of resident species like roosterfish, kingfish, and cubera snapper can be caught within the sheltered inshore waters of Chiriqui. And just offshore, droves of ocean-roaming pelagic species like dorado, yellowfin tuna, and marlin move into the Gulf like clockwork, providing seemingly endless opportunities for big-game-crazed saltwater anglers to catch a fish of a lifetime.

It's no wonder the Spanish named the country "Panama" – a word from the native Kuna Indian language that means "Place of Many Fish," or "Abundance of Fish."

Much of Chiriqui's unspoiled aquatic wealth is due to the strictest fishing regulations of any country in Central America. The Panamanian government forbids the large-scale commercial use of long lines and seine nets within the Gulf, and all billfish species are protected through a mandatory catch-and-release policy.

It's amazing that a fishery of this caliber still exists today... It's a place to be cherished.

Into the Heart of Chiriqui

Just 12 miles offshore from Panama's mainland, the Chiriqui National Marine Park stretches across a chain of 25 islands, harboring networks of coral reefs and thriving populations of tropical fish, sea turtles, and manta rays. The rugged, volcanic islands, with their coconut palms and white sand beaches, are home to howler monkeys, iguanas, tiger herons and other tropical terrestrials like the paca.

It's a pristine, remote, and wild place. No development, no marinas or shops, and very few tourists – tropical paradise as it should be.

While most of the islands in the national park are uninhabited, Isla Parida – the largest island in the chain – is home to Sport Fish Panama Island Lodge, THE place to stay if you want to intimately experience the world-class fishing the Gulf of Chiriqui has to offer.

About Sport Fish Panama Island Lodge

Originally developed as a vacation home by Captain Shane Jarvis and his family, Sport Fish Panama is now an all-inclusive private fishing lodge, complete with luxury accommodations and

daily chartered inshore and offshore fishing adventures. And while the remote island getaway is completely "off-the-grid," it has all the necessities — solar power, filtered water, hot showers, high-speed Wi-Fi, a private chef, and of course, an open bar.

When you stay at Sport Fish Panama, all of the best fishing spots in the Gulf of Chiriqui are only a short boat ride away — that means less time traveling and more time fishing. World-famous places like Hannibal Bank, Isla Ladrones, Isla Montuosa, Isla Secas, and Isla Coiba are all on the itinerary and Capt. Shane Jarvis knows where to go on any given day for the hottest action.

Mere steps away from the Lodge's doorstep, the rich inshore fishery of the Gulf of Chiriqui provides endless entertainment when the offshore bite is slow, or if you simply want to hook into the iconic roosterfish or hard-fighting amberjack.

Plus, if there are any non-anglers in your group, some of the best snorkeling, beachcombing, and wildlife viewing can be had among the many islands of Chiriqui National Marine Park.

Sport Fish Panama is the only private island fishing lodge in all of Panama and they host only one group at a time. It's just you, people you care about, the chill pace of island life, and the best saltwater fishing Panama has to offer.

Biographies & About Pages

Huk Pro Angler Profile: Gerald Swindle

This is another piece written for Huk Performance Fishing, but instead of a blog post, it's a biography for one of their pro staff anglers, Gerald Swindle.

Throughout his 20-year career as a pro angler, Gerald "G-Man" Swindle has garnered a reputation as the funniest man in bass fishing. But beneath his jokes and thick southern accent, he's a man with a relentless work ethic, a compassionate soul, and a serious talent for catching fish.

Before joining the pro circuit, Swindle earned his living as a house framer, working long days in the oppressive Alabama heat. Before that, he was a three-sport athlete at small-town Locust Fork High. When not in class or on the football field, Swindle was either romping through the woods, working the family farm, or fishing the Locust Fork River with his pals.

The year 1998 brought a major turning point in G-Man's life and fishing career. After competing in local jackpot tournaments for years, Swindle nabbed first place at an FLW event on Beaver Lake in Arkansas, taking home \$150,000 in prize money. The win effectively launched his full-time professional fishing career and he's been passionately competing at a high level ever since.

In 2004, two more life-changing events took place for Swindle: he won the 2004 Toyota Tundra Bassmaster Angler of the Year Award; and married his wife of 12 years, LeAnn. As an Elite Level pro on the Bassmaster Tour, Swindle is one of the heaviest-hitting anglers in the circuit, consistently placing high in the rankings in tournaments all over the country.

When Swindle isn't fishing, you'll find him in the woods bowhunting with his buddies or filming for a new hunting TV show called "The Hit List." Around town, you might find him cruising in a hot rod alongside his wife LeAnn, or spending quality time with his close-knit group of friends and family in Warrior, Alabama.

Website Copywriting

Baja Adventure Co. Main Spearfishing Page

Baja Adventure Co. is a charter company based in La Paz, Mexico, offering guided spearfishing, sportfishing, and eco-sightseeing tours. They hired me to write the copy for their website and the project ended up being over 8,500 words. This piece is the main page of the spearfishing section of their website that explains the services they offer, how to book a trip, and when to visit.

Spearfishing is our first passion. Since 2009, we've guided visiting spearos of all skill levels to the best dive spots in the Sea of Cortez and beyond. We have an intimate knowledge of the area and fish, so no matter what time of year or the day's conditions, we know where to go for the best spearfishing action the Baja has to offer.

A few reasons to book with us...

- **No shortage of world-class dive spots or fish...** From our headquarters in La Paz, we have quick access to an incredible variety of high-quality dive spots from reefs and shipwrecks to seamounts and blue water. It doesn't matter if you're a first-timer or a seasoned pro, we have spots to accommodate a wide range of experience levels, depth preferences, and target species.
- **Single-day or multi-day trips available...** Whether you want to spend a single day spearfishing nearby waters, or head further out for a multi-day, off-the-grid spearfishing adventure of a lifetime, we've got you covered.
- **We take care of your catch...** The tasty rewards of your spearfishing efforts won't be spoiled. As soon as you hoist your catch aboard, our crew will clean and ice it down to keep it impeccably fresh while you continue diving. When we get to shore, one of the many excellent local restaurants will prepare your catch of the day for an unforgettable meal.
- **Fast, smooth, and comfortable boats...** We have a small fleet of center console and diving platform boats that we painstakingly keep in perfect condition. For most of our spearfishing trips, our go-to boat is a 27-foot center console that has ample room for your group, your gear, and plenty of ice, drinks, and food. Plus, it's super fast and smooth to cover lots of water to get you on the fish without delay.

- **The best guides in the business...** We don't like to brag, but our guides consistently receive rave reviews from our clients as being the best spearfishing guides in Baja. Not only are our guides experienced divers and spearfishermen, but they're highly educated with degrees in either marine biology or tourism, and fluent in both Spanish and English. When you're on the water with our guides, they're always happy to answer questions about diving and spearfishing techniques and love sharing everything they know about the unique ecology and marine life of the area.
- **We care about our waters...** We take great pride in our fishery and strictly follow all regulations on spearfishing. And in an effort to ensure healthy fish populations into the future, we self-impose limits on taking certain reef species. The Sea of Cortez is a very special place and we do everything we can to make sure it stays that way.

About Our Spearfishing Trips

Every spearfishing trip we offer is completely custom-tailored to your group and the experience you'd like to have. From single-day trips on a budget to all-out multi-day spearfishing extravaganzas – we're here to make it happen.

When you sign up for a trip, you choose:

- Number of days you'd like to spearfish
- Number of divers in your group
- Species you'd like to target
- Types of areas you'd like to dive (reefs, shipwrecks, etc.)
- Specific destinations you'd like to visit and dive

We'll get to work putting together the perfect package for your group. Then, all you have to do is get to La Paz – we'll take care of the rest.

Don't want to travel with all your gear? No problem. We provide some of the necessary gear for free and have everything else you need available for rent.

If you do want to bring your own gear and aren't sure what will work best in our waters, please contact us ahead of time and we'll help you pack accordingly to have the most success when you get here.

Best Time to Visit

In Southern Baja, we're fortunate to have year-round access to some of the most productive spearfishing waters in the Sea of Cortez as well as the East Pacific Ocean. With so many great dive spots within close reach, we can put you onto fish any month of the year – when you visit determines where we'll go for the best action.

Sea of Cortez Seasons – What to Expect

From February to April, we have lots of variety in the Sea of Cortez. The ever-delicious yellowtail is our main target, and when we find them the action is non-stop. Water temperatures are the lowest this time of year, often between 18C and 22C with visibility between 5M and 15M.

From April to July, we focus on diving our favorite reefs which are most productive during this time of year. Amberjacks show up in full force and you have the chance to spear a true trophy-sized fish. Wahoo and other pelagics are also present in good numbers so when we aren't at the reefs, we'll likely be diving blue water. Expect water temperatures between 22C to 25C and visibility between 5M and 25M.

From July to November, pelagic species are where the action is. This is the best time of year to visit if you want to catch huge wahoo, tasty yellowfin tuna, billfish, and all the dorado you can handle. Water temperatures are at their highest between 25C and 28C and visibility can exceed 30M. A fantastic season for spearfishing in the Sea of Cortez.

Pacific Season – What to Expect

While much of our spearfishing takes place in the Sea of Cortez, there is great opportunity in the Pacific for spearos visiting in the fall.

From September to December, we target wahoo, dorado, yellowfin tuna, and marlin on the Pacific side of La Paz with great success. The blue water action in the Pacific is truly world-class, but there are also many reefs available that provide fantastic diving and spearing opportunities. Water temperatures are generally between 20C to 28C, and visibility is often greater than 30M.

Baja Adventure Co. Magbay Sportfishing Location Page

Also from the Baja Adventure Co. website copy project, this piece is one of many "location pages" that go into detail about the services they offer in specific locations around the southern tip of the Baja Peninsula.

Widely unknown and hard to reach, Magdalena Bay (Magbay for short) on Baja's west coast is home to some of the most prolific and unspoiled fishing grounds in the region. With no major cities, no airport, and very few tourists, visiting Magbay is like stepping back in time to experience Baja's raw, untouched past.

With our multi-day sportfishing charters in Magbay we offer:

- **Trips based out of our camp on Isla Magdalena, a barrier island that shelters the bay...**
Or out of Lopez Mateos, one of the only developed towns in the area where more conventional lodging and amenities are available...
- **Guided fishing with all gear provided for the excellent inshore and offshore fishing in the area...** Cast light-tackle in mangrove-lined esteros for grouper, snapper, and snook... Or troll the offshore banks for massive cow tuna, striped marlin, wahoo, and many other species...
- **Fully customizable trips** — you choose how long you stay, your preferred style of fishing (conventional, spinning, fly, spearfishing), target species, and everything else you'd like to experience...

About Our Magbay Sportfishing Charters

Magdalena Bay is a large sheltered bay on the Pacific side of Baja. It's one of the longest bays on the Pacific coast, roughly the same size as San Francisco Bay. A chain of barrier islands protects the bay from the vast Pacific Ocean, creating an ideal environment for a thriving population of marine life including all the most popular species of game fish. The bay is also a hotspot for California gray whales on their yearly migration.

The fishing in and around Magbay is out of this world. Access to the area is very difficult, which has limited the ability for larger charter operations to move in. It's just us, a handful of local seasonal panga fishing guides, and the occasional private fishing yacht passing by. The waters here are truly pristine and we'd like to keep them that way.

In the bay, over 70 miles of mangrove-lined channels provide a seemingly endless source of light-tackle and fly fishing entertainment. Just on the other side of the barrier islands, some of the most productive offshore banks provide world-class fishing for droves of pelagic species. One such place is Thetis Bank, where every year in November, a phenomenon happens where a huge number of striped marlin move in and "pile up." If you time it right, it's marlin fishing like you've never seen before with shots at double-digit hookups.

Getting to Magbay

Like we said, getting to Magbay is difficult if you're on your own. But when you book with us, we offer air transfers from Los Cabos to Magbay on a Cessna 206 to get you to our camp quickly and easily.

For more information about the best times of year to visit, the available options for sportfishing trips to Magbay, and other specifics about booking with us, get in touch. We can't wait for you to experience this special place that few others get to visit and fish!

Scout & Cast Location Descriptions: Oregon and Louisiana

Scout & Cast is a website that helps anglers find new places to fish. The site is built around an interactive map that shows every fishable piece of water within each state with information about access points, boat launches, local weather, and more. They hired me for a huge website copy project that involved writing descriptions of the fishing opportunities in all 50 states. Here are two sample states from the project: Louisiana and Oregon.

Louisiana

Louisiana is covered in water, most of which is loaded with fish. Between the hundreds of miles of coastline touching the Gulf of Mexico and the many lakes and rivers full of trophy bass, anglers have more options than there is time to fish.

Redfish have become the fly angler's favorite pursuit in Louisiana, and with a wealth of marshes, bays, and estuaries along the Gulf coast, the options for chasing reds are nearly endless. Just about any brackish marsh along the coast will hold redfish, but some of the favorite locales are in the bays and marshes directly south of New Orleans, including Golden Meadow, Port Fourchon, and Grand Isle. In many of the same places you find redfish, you'll also find other popular inshore species like speckled trout, flounder, and black drum. Near the mouth of the Mississippi River, the town of Venice is known as one of the best jumping-off points for world-class deep sea fishing in the Gulf, with yellowtail tuna being the primary target. But it's the annual migration of tarpon and bull redfish that draw fly anglers to the area.

Heading inland will take you through Cajun Country and into the heart of some of the best bass fishing the South has to offer. Sharing the border with Texas, Toledo Bend Reservoir was named the number one bass fishing lake in the country, and is where bass in the 10-pound class are frequently caught. A short drive east from Toledo will bring you to the Red River, another famous bass fishery. Within these same waters, along with the hundreds of other lakes, ponds, and rivers, loads of other warmwater species can be caught with a fly including bluegill, crappie, and gar. Louisiana anglers benefit from a year-round fishing season, and though it gets quite hot in the summer, there are always fish biting somewhere.

Oregon

You don't have to travel far to find your way to one of Oregon's top-tier fisheries. Whether you're a streamer-swinging steelheader, dry fly flingin' trout fisher, or stillwater specialist, you'll find year-round fishing opportunities in one of Oregon's beautiful fishing locations. Oregon is well known for its annual runs of anadromous fish — steelhead and several species of salmon — but rainbow, brown, and cutthroat trout can be found in freestone rivers, tailwaters, spring creeks, and lakes throughout the state. There's even a fair amount of bass, panfish, and walleye to be had, too. The variety, beauty, and ease of access to prime fishing water make Oregon one of the most angler-friendly states on the map.

Steelhead fanatics flock to the Deschutes, North Umpqua, and Rogue Rivers along with the many coastal rivers for promising runs of both winter and summer steelhead, along with chinook and coho salmon. Resident populations of trout, both wild and stocked, not only provide angling entertainment while waiting for the steelhead and salmon, but make worthy targets in their own right, any time of year. Some of the more challenging (but rewarding) trout fishing opportunities can be had in Oregon's prized spring-fed rivers such as the Metolius and the Fall River. Stillwater anglers can head into the Cascade mountains to float the many alpine lakes including Sparks, Hosmer, Elk, and the Big and Little Lava Lakes. And don't forget about the Pacific Coast where — in addition to the steelhead, salmon, and trout fishing in the coastal rivers — an incredible assortment of saltwater fish such as lingcod, greenling, and rockfish can be caught on fly from the beaches and jetties. Head just offshore and you can even hook into albacore tuna!

Some of the more noteworthy hatches in Oregon are the epic March Brown mayfly hatches on the Middle Fork Willamette Rivers and Mckenzie river in march; the Stonefly and Salmonfly hatches on the Deschutes in June; and the October Caddis hatch in rivers throughout the state. But good fishing in Oregon isn't necessarily hatch-dependent and quality fish can be caught throughout the year on streamers, nymphs, and terrestrials. No matter the time of year or weather conditions, there are fish to be caught in Oregon.

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