



FISHING TRIP ADVISORS (FTA)

GUIDEBOOK TO SPORTFISHING

LEARN:

- WHAT IS SPORTFISHING
- HOW TO TAKE THE ULTIMATE FISHING PHOTO (AND TELL THE WHOLE STORY)
- HOW TO PACK ACCORDINGLY FOR YOUR TRIP
- TIPS ON CLEANING AND PROCESSING YOUR CATCH
- TIPS ABOUT SPEARFISHING AND WHICH PERSONAL VESSEL IS BEST FOR YOU
- HOW TO FIND THE RIGHT FISHING GUIDE
- FISHING WITH YOUR KIDS AND THE FAMILY
- WHAT TO DO AT A FISHING TOURNAMENT
- THE BENEFITS OF FISHING



Introduction:

Hello Fellow Angler,

We want to thank you and welcome you to our site and social sharing community, FishingTripAdvisors.com. We are avid fishermen and have learned through trial and error about the sport of fishing. It was through the sport we met and quickly became good friends. During our fishing trips and time together we found there was a need for a social sharing site where the fishing community, people and businesses could connect. We decided to put our passion and knowledge to the test and spent the past two years developing the FishingTripAdvisors.com website. An easy to use platform that invites you to engage daily and share your fishing experiences with others, get advice on trips, destinations and rank and rate other fishing related topics in one common place. A place to find real tried and true information rather than the old-fashioned trial and error method. You won't spend a lot of dollars and make a lot of errors losing quality fishing time. Now you have a solid foundation of information right from the beginning when planning your trips.

FishingTripAdvisors.com gives you tips, advice and ratings from folks that have 'been there'...not from some marketing or advertising agency trying to 'get you there'! Read what those who use the products and have been to the destinations have to say. Learn from them and their personal experiences, regardless of what they have caught...how they are still looking for the perfect catch and new fishing adventures.

In addition to the FTA website, we have put our lessons learned and recommendations on fishing related items in this book for you. We have detailed information for you from how to take the ultimate catch photo, what to pack for your fishing trip, safety tips all the way through what to expect when fishing with your family and how to fish tournaments. Our goal was to give you a guidebook for advice and tips to get you doing what you want to do most - fish! Referencing this book will eliminate a lot of time consumed by trying to figure it out yourself.

Fishing is our passion and it is through experiences we learn. Be sure to enter yours on our site. FTA looks forward to reading what you have to share with the fishing community.

Enjoy the sport and good luck!



Bart & Dave

Bart & Dave Fishing Trip Advisors Co-Founders

I. Sportfishing



A. What is Sportfishing?

Sportfishing is angling for recreational or competitive purposes. In other words, you do it for fun rather than for food or survival. This can include saltwater or freshwater sportfishing.

B. Sportfishing for Beginners

Sportfishing varies greatly from the desired fish species, equipment used, and locations you chose to fish from. For example, beginner anglers can practice their skills in more controlled environments like ponds, rivers, lakes and fishing from the shore. Going sportfishing on the fly, without much preparation or planning, is a little more risky in terms of how your day will play out, that is why we suggest easier locations for those who are just starting out than fishing from a boat. It is a good idea to take a short range trip into the ocean to see how your body holds up being on the water. Some people don't feel the ailments of motion sickness. However, we have taken a friend or two on full day trips that got extremely sick from the

motion of the ocean. We have never been able to get them back on the water. We have also seen people begging the captain to turn the boat around. Until you know your tolerance of the elements, take shorter trips. It is better to have a bad 6 hour trip then a bad day and a half and get off the boat dehydrated and sick.

C. Advanced Sportfishing

More adventurous fishermen can choose to go offshore sportfishing. This often entails going after much larger fish and requires a lot more time. For example, ocean sportfishing or deep sea sportfishing adventures can include large game fish like shark, marlin and tuna. It should go without saying that fishing for these species is a lot different than trout and bass fishing.

A couple of ways to do this type of fishing is book a long range boat that will be on the open ocean for several days. You can also get a hotel closer to the fishing grounds and fish on a smaller vessel for a shorter period of time.

Another very advanced form of sport fishing is backcountry fly fishing. Many hours of preparation and effort are needed before a backcountry trip. You will talk to many fishermen that tie their own flies and make their own custom rods. We have heard many stories about these fishing trips and the most eventful moment of the trip was a close encounter with wildlife such as a cougar or brown bear.

D. A Brief History of Sportfishing

Fishing for the purpose of recreation gained popularity around the 16th century. In 1653, Izaak Walton published a book called 'The Compleat Angler'. The book is one of the earliest works that describes the value of fishing as a recreational pastime. It is unknown when exactly recreational fishing began.

Fishing, traditionally, was an activity for purposes of sustenance and survival. Fishing purely for fun and releasing caught fish is a modern development. The evolution of sportfishing to big game fishing was made possible by the motorized boats. The invention of big game fishing is largely attributed to Dr. Charles Frederick Holder, who in the early 1900's published several articles and books * on the subject. His works contain accurate scientific details and describe the excitement of the sport.

****An isle of summer, Santa Catalina; its history, climate, sports and antiquities, (1901)***

The big game fishes of the United States, (1903), part of The American Sportsman's Library

The Log of a Sea Angler, (1906)

Life in the open; sport with rod, gun, horse, and hound in southern california (1906)

E. Saltwater Sportfishing Species

Some of the more common saltwater sportfishing fish species include: marlin, tuna, tarpon, sailfish, shark, mackerel, snook, redfish and salmon. Pelagic fish move with the currents and often times the temperature of the water dictates what species will be in the water. Regions play a big role in where you will find the fish you are looking for. The seasons have a lot to do with where to find the fish. For example, the water temperature in the Los Angeles area rarely gets warm enough to hunt tuna except in the hottest summer months, but the water temperature is great to find halibut and white sea bass. You will not find Tarpon or red drum fish in the Pacific Ocean. The tuna caught on the east coast tend to be much larger than in the Atlantic Ocean then in the Pacific Ocean.

F. Freshwater Sportfishing Species

Popular North American freshwater sportfishing fish species include: bass, trout, pike, catfish, walleye, perch, rock bass, sunfish, and crappie. Lakes are often stocked with different species of farm raised fish. Wild species of fish will respond in different times of the year so check with your local fish and game to make sure you are in the right time of year to be fishing your targeted species. Big penalties and fines can be had if you are fishing the wrong time of year.

It is always best to find a local tackle shop and ask:

- **What is the hot bait?**
- **What are people catching?**
- **Where are the fish at?**

Local tackle shops will be more willing to divulge information after you have already bought something, so go in and buy worms or a small pack of hooks and start a conversation. Then plan to buy your hot bait or lure after they have answered your questions and given you the inside information.

G. Sportfishing Seasons

Recreational fishing can be enjoyed year-round. Of course, spring, summer, and fall are the seasons when a majority of recreational fishing occurs. Winter fishing in the southern states of the US is less of a problem as temperatures are usually permitting. However, American northern states and Canadian sportfishing during the winter is more of a problem. As temperatures drop, many fishing enthusiasts

wrap up for the winter season in the cold regions. Those who choose to continue fishing in the winter can enjoy ice fishing.

H. Ice Fishing

Ice fishing is not for everyone. If you are willing to handle the cold to enjoy your favorite pastime, then it is definitely something to try out. For your northern sportfishing adventure you will need to prepare the right clothes, equipment, and read up on the safety and regulations for your destination. This can be the perfect idea for a unique Canadian sportfishing trip. We strongly recommend a pair of insulated waterproof boots if you are interested in ice fishing and be sure to go your first couple of times with guys who have done it before. This will make you much more comfortable your first couple of times, and will help you prepare before you venture out on your own. A good rule about ice fishing is make sure you know the thickness of the ice. Many new vehicles get swamped from driving over thin ice. One of the warmest and most comfortable ice fishing trips we have been on, was fishing right from a buddy's 4X4, with the heater and the radio playing.

II. The Ultimate Catch Photo

How to take the ultimate catch photo and tell the entire story



“The CATCH”, the most important item in proving your fishing adventure was a success or not. The reward, the trophy, the evidence...and this is where size ‘DOES Matter!’ You want to show people your riches, you want to share that fish you battled with, fought for and won! Now it is time to tell the story with images. From all our catches and photos we have taken over the years the first thing you want to do is take a picture as soon as the fish comes out of the water. The excitement of catching the fish will still be on your face. Some species change color and visually deteriorate after they actually die so take your picture as soon as possible. Your photo will be at the location you got your catch and tell more of the story and last forever!

In order to capture the best pictures you should show the following:

- **A full body shot of you with the fish in hand, compare the size to something people can relate to.**
- **Show the best side of the fish with the most color.**
- **The fish should be held out towards the camera more than normal, this will make your catch appear to be larger in the photo than it actually is.**
- **The fishing rod and reel that you caught it on.**
- **The lure or jig the fish was caught on (we suggest letting the jig hang from the mouth or holding the jig in your hand which can make a great shot too).**

By the way, when it comes to fishing and showing your catch, blood is good. Not from you, but from the fight! Live action shots help tell the story, show the battle and capture the excitement on your face, similar to that look after eating your first tuna heart!

III. Packing for Your Trip



The day and time has come for your fishing excursion. Whether you are going on a local trip to the lake or an exotic destination, once you know where you are going, you need to pack accordingly. Sometimes the excitement gets the best of us and we are so enthusiastic to get that rod out, bait the hook and line in the water, we tend to forget some of the essentials for our adventures. Here are the following items for your checklist and some tips as well.

Clothing is the first thing you should start with. Take into account what type of fishing you will be doing (walking along the shore, fishing from a vessel, fishing from a stationary spot). Fishing is an outdoor activity and the weather can change rapidly, especially in a mountainous area or on the open sea. Make sure to check the weather before your trip and bring the appropriate items to stay warm, dry and comfortable. Be cautious of over-packing but we recommend packing a hat, sun protective clothing, quick drying, odor-resistant clothing with bug repellent, which will help if you are fishing in areas with flying or biting bugs. Wind blocking material is always helpful in staying warm and acts as an added layer of waterproofing. Shirts with pockets are very useful as well to help you have extra terminal tackle and supplies in reach.

Rods & Tackle are essential unless you are noodling...it is really hard to catch a fish without a rod and tackle. We always suggest adding a little WD40 to your tackle, reels and eyes of your fishing rods before going out on a fishing trip. Everything flows easier with a little WD40. It is also a good idea to mark your rods with color tape or a bright color zip tie so you can identify your rod quickly when you need to change your tackle. Remember to always clean your tackle when you get home and never to store your gear with salt water on it...make sure to wash all your tackle with fresh water after your trip...you will be thanking yourself you did on your next trip! You can also rinse your reels in the sink on most overnight or multi day trips when you break your gear down for the ride home.

Essential Tools for 'on the fly' repairs would be a multi-tool device, long-handle flat head screwdriver and Duct tape. You will often encounter a situation where you need to make a quick-fix to get your line back in the water and these items will help. When you are fishing along a shore or moving around you don't want to carry a lot of excess weight so using a front belly bag or fanny pack you can put these items in there and access easily. If you are fishing from a primary location and have a base to put your tackle box and backpack, you will allow yourself to pack some extra tools and gear and test out some of your newer items. When packing your tackle for a day boat trip you should keep your heavy terminal tackle at the bottom and frequently used tackle on top.

FTA Tip: Keep an extra small box to store hooks that have had contact with salt water so you don't mix salty gear with clean gear.

Water is a necessity in fishing and in life. Always bring a little extra for yourself in bottles or camel type bags if you are hiking. Stay hydrated and a good gauge to follow is to make sure you drink half of your body weight in relation to ounces (i.e., if you weigh 180 pounds, you should drink 90 ounces of water per day). Having clean, fresh water on hand also helps in rinsing your catch and especially your tackle.

First Aid is another category that can somehow be overlooked when packing for a trip. A kit is usually lightweight, can fit easily in your tackle box, backpack or fanny back and when working with sharp objects, there is generally a need for at least a bandaid or two. A couple other options are Liquid Skin and/or Krazy/Super Glue. Pack a small bottle of antiseptic or alcohol wipes, some aspirin or Tylenol, candy ginger and motion sickness medication, like Bonine, which should be taken BEFORE you get on the water. We have seen far too many friends that wait until they got underway and paid the price by staying in their bunks for two days!

IV. Cleaning and Processing Your Catch



You caught your fish and now it is time to take it home, back to camp, to the galley or wherever you like to slice, dice and get it cleaned and ready to eat or save for later. If you decide to transport your catch, always bring an ice chest in the car or on the boat. An ice chest also makes a great storage space for tackle bags, boxes, fishy clothes, bait, hats, gear and anything else to give you more space and keep your hands free.

There are predominantly two knives you will need and the sharper the knife is the easier it is to cut the skin of tough fish like Dog Tooth Snappers. You will also need a flexible knife to follow along the bloodline or the rib cages of tuna.

- **Filet Knife - one that is flexible to follow the contour of the rib cage**
- **Any Strong Knife that can cut through bones**

Remember to keep the fish as cool as possible, out of the sun and in the water it was caught in (very important). Get ice first thing once your fish is in the ice chest. Salt in some cases will help ice last longer because it lowers the temperature of the surrounding water and chills your catch faster. The freezing point of saltwater is zero (0) degrees fahrenheit, and the freezing point of fresh water is 32 degrees fahrenheit. Starting with ice cubes of fresh water and adding salt will make the ice get colder than 32 degrees fahrenheit. Remove the fish and lay a bed of ice on the bottom of the ice chest, then rest your catch on top of bed of ice. Carefully pour the remainder of ice on top of the fish being extra careful not to bruise the meat.

Most fish need to bleed at the time of catch and gutted when time permits. Fish can be put on ice for a few days as the meat becomes tougher and easier to filet with time. Some deep water fish like Tilefish need time for the nitrogen to leach out of their meat as well for improved taste.

FTA Tip: Only take as many fish as you can store in your freezer and maybe a few for family and friends. Release the rest and take into account the cost of filleting and vacuum sealing each fish if you don't have time to do it all.

Vacuum Seal and Ziploc Bags

Ziploc freezer bags are easy to obtain and are readily available from many stores. If using a Ziploc bag, fill a bucket or sink with water and submerge the bag to remove the air around your fish.

Vacuum Sealers are convenient, however, they require an investment. When purchasing be aware of how many consecutive seals you can make before the machine needs to cool down. Some machines are designed for anglers and hunters, that can make vacuum bags non stop and also battery powered for vacuum sealing your catch in the field. Vacuum sealing is ideal and if you are going to be fishing a lot you can get away with a cheaper food sealer for a while but they will not last very long, you can spend a few hundred dollars for a better unit that will last much longer. One of our favorites is the Foodsaver "Gamesaver" which comes with a carry bag and a/c adapter for sealing your fish or meat in the field or as soon as possible, and for long trips you can vacuum seal and freeze so your fish stays fresh longer.

FTA Tip: Try not to rinse your fish off since water will damage the meat and try to remove all of the dark blood line. We always try to dry our fish for a few days with paper towels before sealing them and wrapping them in saran wrap will help keep the meat from turning brown.

We have had whole fish on ice gutted and bleed sit for over a week, not as much time as you would have on a commercial fishing vessel but enough to keep the fish in mint condition until we had time to filet it. Filleted fish should be vacuum sealed and or frozen within a day or two of being cut up. Try to remove all of the bloodline and any dark meat since leaving that part will make your fish taste and smell fishy. To extend its freshness the filets can be put in a Ziploc bag if you didn't vacuum seal it yet and put in a big bowl of ice and cover in the fridge to help keep the fish fresher.

Safe food handling temperature:

For raw fish or sushi, the FDA has these recommendations; The FDA inspectors have the parasite destruction guarantee, which is accomplished by:

- Freezing and storing seafood at -4°F (-20°C) or below for 7 days (total time)
- Freezing at -31°F (-35°C) or below until solid and storing at -31°F (-35°C) or below for 15 hours
- Freezing at -31°F (-35°C) or below until solid and storing at -4°F (-20°C) or below for 24 hours which is sufficient to kill parasites

The FDA's Food Code recommends these freezing conditions to retailers who provide fish intended for raw consumption (for further information, please visit the FDA website, www.fda.gov).

Eating fresh fish is always better and remember to try and give away as much fresh fish as possible. This will greatly cut down on the cost of freezer bags or time vacuum sealing. After fish is cut into portion size servings, dry fish of moisture and place in a clean dry bag. Water is your enemy when it comes to avoiding freezer burn, make sure your meat is dry before sealing bag and lay it flat so it stores and cooks better. If you hoop net for lobster or crab, freeze the fish skin and parts inside your bait cage inside a Ziploc bag so you are ready when the season opens.

FTA Tip: When getting rid of leftover fish guts and bones, put bones and guts in a bag and freeze until trash day which will cut down on the odor.

V. Different Kinds of Fishing



Whether you are going freshwater or saltwater fishing, there are multiple ways to fish from a variety of different places. These are some tips and suggestions on what to bring and how to make your day easier:

A. Freshwater Fishing

- **From the shoreline:** Bring rod holders, a comfy chair for everyone, waders or rubber boots if the shore line is muddy and hiking boots for rocky shores.
- **Fly Fishing:** You should wear full waders with either rubber or felt bottom boots and a wading jacket if you are fishing a stream or river. Check your area for current regulations since some places are banning felt lined boots to keep invasive species from spreading. Look for a lake or stream with a wide open area to throw your line without getting hung up in the trees.

FTA Tip: Practice casting at a park or an area with a big, open space with room around you.

- **Lakes:** Ideally check with the local tackle store for hot spots and hot baits before going and if you can fish from shore or will you need a boat. If you need a to rent a boat keep in mind every lake varies so be ready to go slow or pick a lake that has fast boats. If your trip includes camping overnight, find out if night fishing is permitted since different species bite at different times.
- **Rivers:** Depending on the size and flow of the river you can use waders to hiking boots. You can sit and wait for the fish or walk up and down the shore line looking for them. Make sure to pack extra water and food and maybe a small flashlight if you plan on walking any distance.

FTA Tip: Most fish can be found near inlets or old river beds.

- **Ponds:** Most ponds across the USA are stocked with either/or carp, catfish, bass, bluegill, trout or minnows that will build its own eco system. Private ponds are excellent places to take the whole family since they receive little to no fishing pressure and it's easy to hook up. However, you will need to get permission first and remember to catch and release.
- **From a Boat:** Take your motion sickness pills at least an hour before you get on the water if you need them. If you are renting, call first and see how fast they go so you can plan your day accordingly...there are some rental boats that go 7 knots and some places that rent real bass or pontoon boats that will go 40 knots. Bring a cooler, seat cushion, minimal gear but enough to target all the species that are there since throughout the day different species of fish feed at different times. Livewells and fish finders (sonar) on the boats are nice but not mandatory.

B. Saltwater Fishing

- **Rods & Reels:** A good saltwater rod and reel are the foundation for successful saltwater fishing. Today's saltwater rods and reels are high-tech tools that use space-age materials and precision workmanship to handle tough elements and tough fish. When purchasing a saltwater rod, consider the length, power and action you need. Longer rods cast farther, while shorter rods provide more power for fighting fish. Action is rated from "fast" for a rod that is stiff to "slow" for a rod that bends all the way to the handle. "Power" is the weight that the rod can lift from light to extra heavy. Rods are also categorized by the pound-test line or lure weight that they are designed to work with. Most saltwater fishing rods are made of graphite or fiberglass. Graphite rods are stiffer and more sensitive, while fiberglass fishing rods are tougher and more powerful.
- **Spinning reel:** Next to push button starter reels (spincast or triggerspin), spinning reels are the easiest to learn how to fish with. The spinning reels these days they have developed enough to pull big, hundred pound tunas.
- **Bait casting reel:** These reels also have come a long way! We have a 50 wide Shimano Tiagra that weighs around 8 lbs and recently picked up a new Talca 2 that weighs only a few pounds but has the same drag strength as the bigger reel, and with the new braid superlines it holds enough for anything we've encountered on the west coast. These reels are the norm for west coast offshore and tournament fishing. Remember, they require a lot of practice to get your thumb to stop the spool from over spinning and creating a birds nest.

FTA Tip: To get your birds nest out, reel up line, loosen drag some and pull the line off the reel with your thumb until it stops, then reel in some line and repeat until it's all clear.

- **Fly Fishing:** Using fly gear in the sea can be a lot of fun but will take quite a bit of chum to keep the fish interested enough to go after a look alike fly.
- **Surf:** One of the best parts about surf fishing is you can use any reel you want and you never know what you might catch. Locally we target halibut but will catch white seabass, yellowfin croakers, many species of perch, striped bass, calico, sand bass, sharks, rays, skates, needlefish and trumpet fish and that's all using Lucky Crafts' FlashMinnows.
- **Jigging:** Or using a jig, is a type of fishing lure. A jig consists of a lead sinker with a hook molded into it and usually a bright color to attract fish. Jigs are intended to create a jerky, vertical motion, as opposed to spinnerbaits which move through the water horizontally. The jig is very versatile and can be used in both salt and fresh water. Many species are attracted to the lure which has made it popular among anglers for years. For successful jigging, the jigger needs to use a rod which is good for feeling a strike, and needs to stay in contact with the lure and get it to where the fish are. Most fish caught by jigs are on the drop so be ready to throw your reel in gear when your line stops.

C. Spearfishing

- **From Shore:** There is no better feeling than hiking down a mountainside with all your gear and kicking out into the kelp forest and bagging a personal best fish! The load of adrenaline helps you get back up the mountain and the charlie horse legs the following days remind you of how much fun you've had. You want to pack an industrial strength trash bag and a filet knife so you can lighten your bag going back up the hill. If you don't think its a personal best you can gut it or do a quick filet job before you hike up the hill.
- **Diving from a Boat:** Make sure you mark all your gear so you can identify yours. After a while it all starts to look the same. Try to keep sight of your boat at all times and pay attention to the current and try not to get swept out to sea. While looking for schooling fish it is helpful to have some kind of Fish Attracting Device (FAD).
- **Open Water Diving:** This would be looking for schooling fish with some kind of Fish Attracting Device (FAD). We usually bring a buoy marker and have attached old jigs and rubber baits to make it look like there's a bait fish party.
- **Scuba:** Always make sure you buy your compressed air from reputable dealers. You need to make sure you keep all of your scuba gear in good working order and your tank inspections are up to date. Spearfishing while using the tank takes extra care since you don't want to spook the fish with your bubbles but you want to cover as much ground as possible.
- **Freediving Course:** If you plan on freediving spearfishing then it is highly recommended you take a class. We had training and took courses to become better fishermen. We took a level 1 course which enabled us to get our static breath hold to 2:30 minutes and dive to 60'. It is very important to get training as you will learn a lot about safety and more importantly...what not to do! We at FTA suggest you don't skip this important training for both safety and enjoyment.

VI. Fishing Vessels



Single Person Vessel

Fishing from a Single Person Vessel is an experience everyone should try. The sense of peace, tranquility and connectivity to the water below makes you feel alive and alone with the fish. The thrill of making the catch by yourself on your own vessel is everlasting and will keep you going back for more. Some of the most popular ways to fish from a single vessel are listed here:

- **Kayak (Sit on tops):** These are great for surf launching wherever you want, once you learn how to time the waves you can go lobster hoop netting, scuba and free dive off them and can use the kayak to tire fish out. You will need a decent paddle, either carbon fiber or a blend of lightweight metals and carbon fiber or if you don't want to use a paddle you can get a pedal kayak. You will need a thick sponge and or a hand bilge pump in case water gets into your kayak as well.
- **Float Tube:** These come in handy when you want to get on a quiet body of water but if the current or wind comes up you'd better move fast. We've seen them decked out with rod holders and fish finders. Years ago there was an article about a guy using a float tube off the California coast and had hooked into something big that was towing him out to sea. He had to cut the line, so there are some safety factors you have to consider when you are halfway bobbing in the water fishing.
- **Stand-Up Paddleboard (S.U.P.):** This can be one of the best ways to fish since you can launch almost anywhere. A S.U.P. gives you a great view of the water and you really get to see some incredible underwater and top water action. A lot of people say they feel fishing from a S.U.P. gave them a better understanding of fishing from the California shoreline. We find it less of a hassle and a lot easier to fish from a S.U.P. than a kayak due to the simple fact you can only bring what you carry. You can pack a kayak full of different gear and extra things that you most likely won't use. That results in extra cleaning and maintenance of your gear. One of the great things about fishing from a S.U.P. is the fear or rush of falling in the water. A beach launch or landing is much easier than from a kayak.
- **Wave Runner:** We started fishing off wave runners in Florida about twelve years ago and it is one of the most fun kinds of fishing because you can fish a ripping inlet, go out to the tideline or troll the peaceful inter coastal waterways. You can use spinning gear and a light line since you can chase down your fish.

Small Vessels

There is some interesting history about the many different kinds of small vessels which have been used as fishing boats to catch fish in the sea, or on a lake or river with different names spanning the globe. According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), at the end of 2004, the world fishing fleet consisted of about 4 million small vessels, of which 2.7 million were undecked (open)

boats. While nearly all decked vessels were mechanised, only one-third of the undecked fishing boats were powered, usually with outboard engines. The remaining 1.8 million boats were traditional craft of various types, operated by sail and oars. Even today, many traditional fishing boats are still in use. Most people in the US who fish from smaller vessels have motors.

- **Pros of having your own vessel:**

- you are your own captain so you pick where you want to go
- you can put whatever kind of gear or electronics on it

- **Cons of having your own vessel:**

- you have to figure out where the fish are
- you get to fix everything when it breaks

FTA Tip: When pulling up to a paddy or weed line in the open ocean, most of the bigger fish are off of it patrolling the perimeter so don't pull up next to them and scare any fish that may be holding underneath...if they are hungry they will charge toward your bait and boat.

Open Party Boats

This is where the fun begins! Getting out on the water with a larger party and catching fish is one of the most popular ways to fish. There are day trips and multi day/week excursions with thousands of guides to choose from. The premise of FTA was built from our experiences and memories we have over the years on the open party boats. And the Goal of FTA to is make sure every fishing trip is a great one (See section VII for more on picking the best trips and guides).

With all our lessons learned we will start with your feet. Pack a good pair of deck boots or shoes, so when the deck gets washed and the wave splash through the gunwale you will stay nice and dry...nothing worse than having wet shoes. Xtratuf is a good brand we like to wear and they will last the longest. We suggest adding inserts for extra comfort for all day offshore trips. You can also try a pair of very comfortable shoes like the all-leather Skechers Energy shoe. If you Scotchgard them heavily and look out for the waves and wash downs they will stay much drier. Sandals are also a good option for those hot days you want to cool off.

When on the water, we like to use polarized sunglasses with brown or amber lenses for low light conditions and grey or black lenses for full sun. The brands we recommend are Costa Del Mar, Keanon, Hobie and Spy sunglasses. We also use a dry bag backpack from Columbia that keeps everything dry and bugs out since it will fold down to a waterproof seal at the top. Remember to layer your clothing if there is any chance of wind or cold weather, and we fish the Catalina and Channel Islands year round where it can get cool so we always bring waterproof pants, shells and use sweat pants and thermal underwear to stay warm and dry. Our favorite fishing shirts are either Columbia's PFG, Exofficial and Simms because they protect you from the sun, are light weight and keep you from getting too dirty. Again, be sure to mark your gear so you can identify it and see if anything is missing and count your rods before you get on and off the boat.

FTA Tip: Open party bunk selection should be your first priority once you get on the boat to get a mid-height bunk. If the engine noise doesn't bother you then find a bunk towards the stern of the boat and if you like a little more quiet (to go with your noise canceling headphones) then head towards the bow. Be aware, you will be rocking more the further up on the boat you go. If you get a mid-level bunk you can roll in and out with ease, the top bunks require some coordination with a moving boat and the bottom ones sometimes smell like mold and will be the coldest.

VII. eSearching for a Fishing Guide

When looking for a fishing guide, most people prefer referrals but when none are available you will need to dig through pages of local fishing forums and trust their opinions...or search us online! A few questions to ask your guide before you book your trip:

- Does your guide provide all the necessary gear?
- Will your guide be providing meals?
- Will you be fishing from the land or in a
- Does your guide practice catch and release, or will you be eating what you catch?
- Is your guide specializing in the species you are targeting?

Until now, there has never been a centralized website with a community of like-minded anglers to share their experiences. The FTA website (www.fishingtripadvisors.com) was developed and built with this missing element being the basis of the business. Our mission is to help fishermen discover and share the perfect hook up with the right guides, tours, adventures and experiences.

VIII. Fishing Tournaments

Fishing tournaments are a lot of fun and take real dedication, but to get that illustrious trophy or bring in the biggest fish and tip the scales above the competition, you must know what it takes to win. You have to plan to fish hard for the full time of your event and you should try and add a few days before for pre fishing your area if you can, it will pay off during the event. You will get to know which baits to use, what you should expect to catch and how to map out your day. Your nights will be taken up preparing your gear for the next day and of course the awards dinner.

A lot of people ask what it takes to be a professional fisherman. First and foremost it takes an intense dedication of your time and secondly a serious investment of money. Ask a professional fisherman about the money and you might be shocked! For example, a professional Bass fisherman will spend anywhere from \$80-\$120 thousand dollars a year and that is fishing JUST ONE tournament circuit. Where does the money go? Travel, fuel, repairs, hotels, entrance fees, gear...just to name a few. Professional fishermen understand that you need to win tournaments to get paid so Sponsorship is very important in being able to help finance their talents and get them on the podium.



IX. Fishing with Children and Family



Like a lot of you reading the FTA Guidebook to Sportfishing, we are family men. We have brought our families along on many trips and have learned a lot of information to share.

- Young anglers might not have the attention span you would like for boat fishing but surf fishing is a great alternative or fishing lake side where the children can run and play and stay active.
- Everytime we take our children fishing, we try to teach them a new fishing tip. We don't expect them to completely grasp the proper way to tie a knot. However, repetition and patience is a reward in itself. This opens the probability of one day they will be tying their own knots, possibly better than you can. (p.s. girls are especially good...Dad's, have you ever tried to braid your daughters hair?) Start small and slow from trip to trip. Give them a little more knowledge each time and they will enjoy it. Let your younger kids play with the bait until you can hook and hand them a fish to reel in. We always try to bring a bait rig (sabiki) when we fish saltwater to quickly catch something for our kids to play with and look at.
- Lets face it, we are bringing our children and family fishing with us hoping they get the love of fishing and the great outdoors like we have. The object is to make sure your family is enjoying themselves and they are being included in the activities. We would all like great family pastimes. Fishing with your family means more often than not, you are doing the majority of the work until that moment of catching the fish, and handing it off to them and helping them reel it in.
- Take into account what type of fishing you will be doing. It wouldn't be in your best interest to take you 6 year old daughter on a 2 day off shore or 2 day deep sea fishing trip for her first outing. When choosing your first trips pick easy trips or simple locations. Start small and slow from trip to trip. Give them a little more knowledge and they will enjoy and understand it a lot more.

X. Safety

Safety is one of the most important things to learn and understand when it comes to your fishing experiences. There are many elements in the great outdoors that you need to be aware of and spending the time to research, plan and pack accordingly are keys to staying safe. Here are some of our discoveries:

When it comes to Fishfinders & Navigation, Global Positioning Systems (GPS) and Very-High Frequency (VHF) devices, the line between accessory and necessity might not be clear. However, the need for a Personal Flotation Device (PFD), a signal light, and a whistle are 'must-have' items. The USCG has very few requirements when it comes to mandated safety gear from non-motorized Vessels but you must have the following:

PFD's

- A PFD (needs to be worn at all times on wave runners and some boats but does not need to be worn on kayaks and S.U.P.s, although you need to have one with you)
- A signal light (but only if the operator will be out after dark)
- A sound device (with no limitations to quality or quantity)

That it! Amazingly, we have found some operators don't even carry PFD's...the most important of all safety gear! The USCG has very strict regulations for approved flotation devices. Make sure your PFD has a large label with size and weight minimums and the chest size. The label will describe the type of vessel the PFD is intended for. The USCG approves levels Type I -Type V. Even though the USCG does not require you to, it is a good idea to wear your life vest at all times.

FTA Tip: Inflatable PFD's might not be the the best idea when dealing with sharp hooks and fishing tackle.

Signal Lights

- Kayaking can be dangerous and even the most experienced Kayaker can be caught off guard.
- Kayaks are virtually invisible and silent in the dark or in fog.
- Even on the clearest of days, unexpected fog, or a miscalculation on timing can leave you out past dark.
- The most important light is a white navigation light which can be found at most Marine stores and we prefer products from Perko, Sea Sense, Hella and Ridgid.

Several companies manufacture different lights that are acceptable, however when it comes to something that could possibly save your life, spend the extra money and get a good quality light. You should understand, fishing involves water and some of the harshest conditions and wear and tear. Rust and corrosion will ruin your less expensive gear so invest for the long-term and save in the long run!

XI. Benefits of Fishing

There are a number of reasons why recreational fishing has become so popular in North America and one of the fastest growing activities in the outdoor category. We have outlined some of the top ones here for you:

- **Social Activity** Recreational fishing has a way of bringing people together. It is an excellent way to gather your best friends and enjoy long, unobstructed hours of fun, conversation, and good times in the outdoors. You can make many lasting memories and take photos to remember them by.
- **Stress Relief** Fishing is one of the best ways to get away from the stresses of everyday life. You will not find traffic jams, meetings, or credit card statements when you are out fishing.
- **Fun, Thrills, and Excitement** The thrill of pursuing big game fish can not fully be described in words or even in sportfishing pictures. You need to be there to understand what it feels like to reel in a giant fish.
- **Feeling of Accomplishment** Fishing is quite challenging and overcoming these challenges brings about feelings of success and accomplishment. To be successful you often need to plan carefully, review the fishing and weather reports, choose the right equipment, and of course – get lucky. Even the most experienced fishermen are subject to luck on some days. Finally, when you do catch the trophy fish that you have been chasing for a long time, there is an undeniable sense of achievement.
- **Food as a Bonus** Many anglers choose to catch and release, going fishing purely for the sport. However, there are also times when you are salmon fishing and land the large one. While overfishing is harmful, there is nothing wrong with bringing a few fish home when and where it is allowed. The most rewarding feeling is giving your friends and family fresh fish and every time fishing comes up, your friends will still be raving about how great that piece of salmon was you gave them 3 years ago!

Fish contain many nutrients and essential fatty acids that are highly recommended by nutritionists as part of a healthy diet. In addition, there are many delicious and healthy recipes for cooking a wide variety of fish. We highly enjoy eating and sharing the fish we catch. And by the way...who doesn't love a fresh fish eating party?



XII. Summary

Hopefully you have enjoyed reading the FTA Guidebook to Sportfishing! We are life-long fishermen who have discovered places, found friends and learned many lessons along the way. Our goal with this book was to share some basics to get you through a trip and help you plan better, find some helpful tips and get you out on the water more often with optimal results. Fishing is not only about the catch but the experience. We all went through learning and growing processes to get to where we are today. Our mistakes will be your triumphs!

We have spent thousands of hours fishing recreationally all the way to competing in tournaments. This is our first book to help you with your fishing experiences. We expect to write and share many more over the years.

Everything from booking the best possible fishing trip to finding your destination, what to pack, which vessels you can fish, picking the right bunk, buying on budget or not (how to and not get burned) and having the best fishing experience will be found at fishingtripadvisors.com.

Thank you for joining our website and our fishing central community. Welcome aboard!!!

FishingTripAdvisors.com

Discover & Share the Perfect Hook Up!

