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So You Think That You Want to Start Fishing

You have been picking up fishing magazines and watching fishing shows on TV for a while now and you finally said to yourself, "self, I want to stop living vicariously through the fishing exploits of others and I'm ready to actually go out on the water and try it for real". You are becoming what the tackle and boat manufacturers and sellers call a prospect.

We here in Florida are lucky to have a myriad of different types of fishing available for you to try. There is excellent freshwater and saltwater fishing all around you. In the fresh water you can fish for everything from trophy bass to catfish and if you go to the southern part of the state, there are even some very exotic freshwater opportunities including peacock bass, snakehead, knifefish, cyclids and many more. In salt water, we have a wealth of great gamefish that includes anything you could want from Marlin to Snook.

We also have lots of very tasty saltwater fish for table fare including Grouper, Snapper and Mahi Mahi.

So the first decision you have to make is what do you want to fish for? Most of us just can't afford to go and tell the friendly tackle store owner that you want to start fishing, could he/she please sell you everything that you need to fish in Florida. While this would be nice, there is so much completely different equipment needed for all of the varied fishing opportunities that we have, you could clean out your 401K and still not make a dent. In addition to tackle and bait, many of the fishing opportunities require a specialized sort of powered fishing platform called a BOAT (break out another thousand). BOATS are varied in size and power to reflect the size and location of the fish and some would say the size of the owner's private parts. These can range from a \$200 kayak to a large sportfishing powerboat that costs as much as the Gross National Product of most Central American Countries. Clearly, the choice of what to fish for is determined by a combination of your hopes, dreams, aspirations and the size of your wallet.

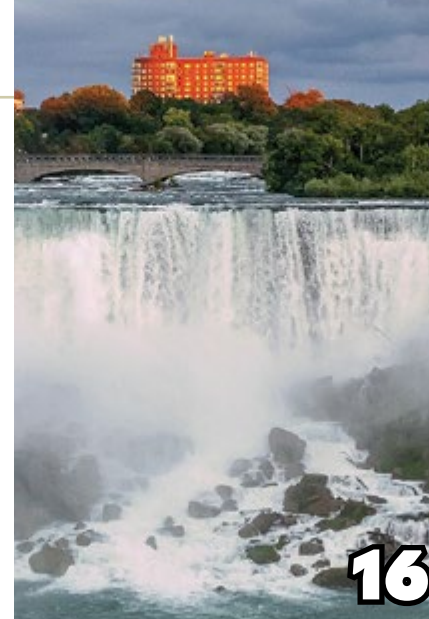


Once you have decided what type of fishing suits your needs, you can then begin researching what you need to succeed. The Internet is a great source of information about fishing techniques and equipment so you may want to start there. We all know that the Internet police make absolutely certain that nothing untrue ever gets posted there; therefore you can be sure that you can count on any information that you find. Your local bait and tackle shops are also a great source of information and most of them are more than happy to provide free guidance to a novice. Guides are another great source of hands on experience. A guided trip for your chosen quarry will cost you a few bucks, but it is well worth the money. Your guide will provide all of the necessary equipment and give you a chance to try out different rigs to see what you like. A guide will also provide a BOAT and they will take responsibility for any of the thousands of dollars worth of things that can and do break.

Fishing is a great way to relax and spend some leisure time with friends and family. The key to having fun is picking the type of fishing that best suits your personality and pocketbook. I'll see you out there.

If you want to go fishing but are not ready to take on the expense of a BOAT, stop by Belle Harbour Marina and rent one of our great boats; leave the fuss and the thousands to us.

Merle & Flip



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ON THE COVER: Misty Wells with a gorgeous and healthy Steelhead caught on a recent trip to the beautiful state of New York. Read more about her adventure by flipping to page 16 of this issue!

DEPARTMENTS

- 4 MERLE'S MIND**
Random Thoughts with Merle
- 12 TIDE CHECK**
Florida West Coast: September 2024
- 24 FISHING FORECAST & TACKLE TALK**
with Captains Sergio & George

FISHING

- 8 SNOOK: A FISH WITH AN ATTITUDE!**
by Captain George Hastick
- 12 SALTWATER FISHING IN SOUTH FLORIDA**
by Captain Justin Searcy
- 26 WADE FISHING ESSENTIALS**
by David Ulgenalp
- 28 TALES FROM THE OLD GUY**
by David Mallory
- 30 GEARING UP FOR THE FALL**
by Captain Sergio Atanes

DESTINATIONS

- 22 FISHING ON FLORIDA'S SPORTS COAST**
A Treat for Anglers of Every Level

FEATURE STORY

- 16 FISHING ONE OF THE WONDERS OF THE WORLD: NIAGARA FALLS, USA**
by Misty Wells

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SNOOK: A FISH WITH AN ATTITUDE!

by Captain George Hastick

You have to love an equal opportunity bait destroyer. Snook are one of the fastest ambush attackers in the Tampa Bay area. They are like a guided missile just waiting for bait to come into their sight. Whether it's a live bait or artificial, they will hit with such a ferocious strike that you will see the water explode and hear their jaws snap shut when they chase a bait to the top of the water surface.

Now, if you are in deeper water, you might not see or hear the strike, but if you are a seasoned snook angler, there is no mistaking that tell tale "thump" a snook does when it hits your bait.



This is where your skill, some luck, and your adrenaline all kick in at the same time. Those first few seconds can make or break you, if you let them get the jump on you. The goal in those first few seconds is to put the heat to the fish and get them away from any nearby structures.

If you are pulling them out from under the mangroves

keep the rod low and to the side while pulling them out. This will keep the line angle lower so as not to

catch on to the low hanging limbs but will also deter them from jumping as much as possible.

They are also great at throwing a hook or breaking your leader with their sharp gill plates, when they come to the top of the water to jump or give a good gill rattling head shake out of the water.

The same things that we hate that they do is also the adrenalin rush that keeps us coming back for more!

They like a variety of structures to hang out by as long as there is a food source there for



Once they grab your bait, they may (or may not) swim slowly at first, but once you set that hook, you will be latched onto a speeding bullet. They are capable of rates of up to 24 miles per hour with explosive bursts of speed. Now, they are no bonefish that can hit up to 40 miles per hour, but they are usually not too far away from structure and they will head straight for it, to break you off.



During the day fishing the flats or docks I like to use 10-15 pound Fins Spin5 or Wind-tamer braid and 25 pound test Seaguar fluorocarbon leader with a 1/0-2/0 circle hook with live bait. At night, while fishing bridges and docks, you can up your line and leader sizes to help get those larger fish away from the structure. This is because the darkness of night will help hide the line from their keen eyesight. Some 25-30 pound braid with 30-50 pound leader will work; adjusting as needed to get the hits. So, get out there and try your hand at catching some "linesiders" yourself! 🎣

them to thrive on. They can be very lazy and will usually put themselves in a position that bait will come to them in the current naturally. This is where your presentation and or your cast can make all the difference on whether you get the hit or not. One foot closer and nice pitch under a dock or mangrove can mean success or not.

Captain George Hastick of "Fish Hunter Fishing Charters" in St. Pete has been fishing the waters of Tampa for over 35 years & guiding over 20 years. From novice to professional; Captain George will make you feel as if you have been fishing buddies for years. Contact him at 727-525-1005, www.FishTampa.com or email CaptGeorge@TampaBay.rr.com.

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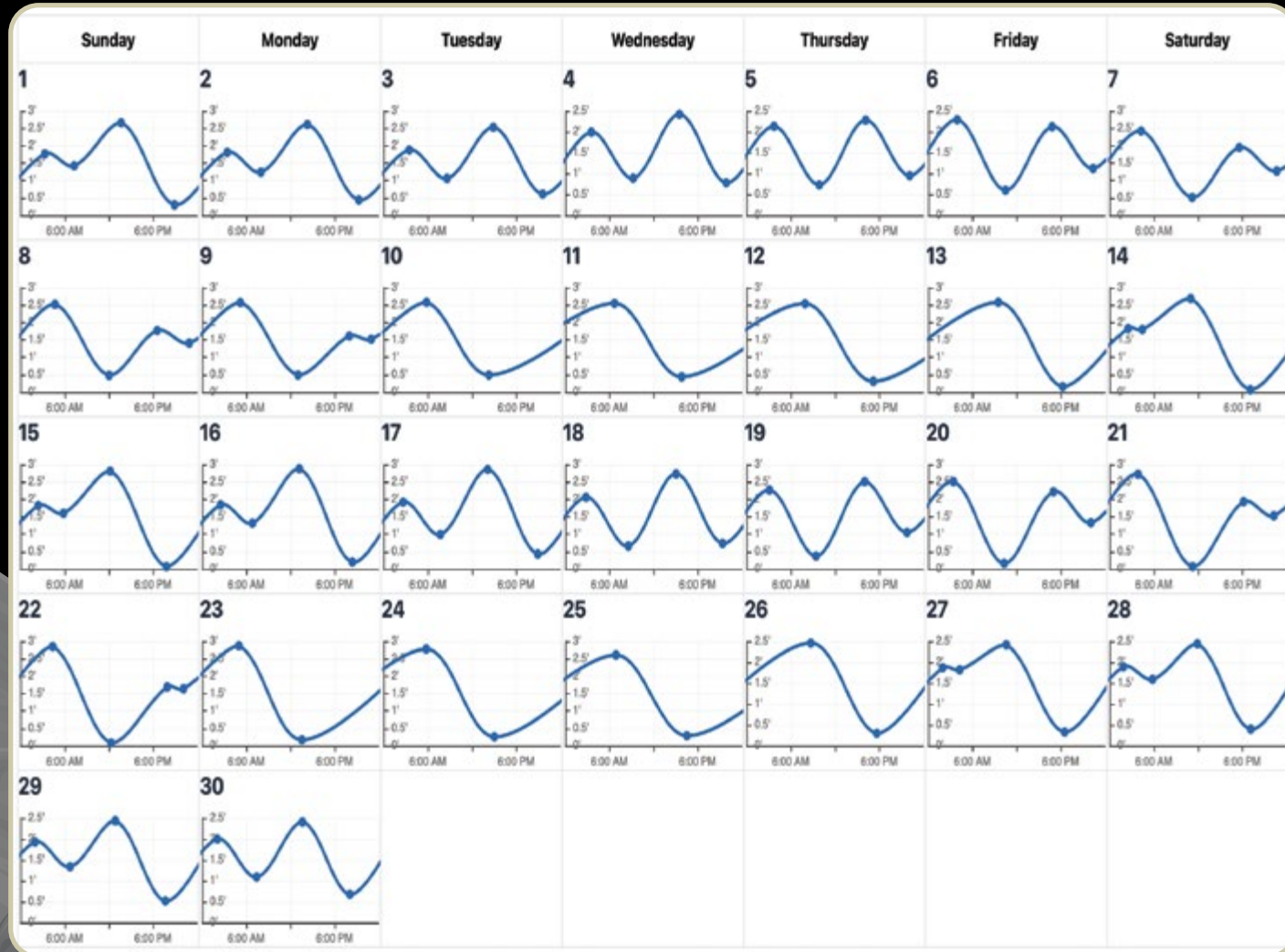
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Conversions for Clearwater Beach Area

High	Low	
-0:02	-0:10	Dunedin, St. Joseph Sound
-0:05	-0:15	Anclote Key, South End
+0:42	+0:42	Tarpon Springs, Anclote River
-0:07	-0:03	North Anclote Key
+0:41	+0:39	Old Port Tampa
+0:33	+0:53	Gulf Harbors
+0:42	+1:05	Hwy 19 Bridge, Pithlachascotee River
+0:50	+1:35	New Port Richey, Pithlachascotee River
+0:36	+0:43	Hudson, Hudson Creek

Conversions for St. Marks River Area

High	Low	
+0:23	+1:18	Everglades City
-1:17	-1:03	Cape Romano
-1:04	-1:08	Marco Island
-1:59	-2:04	Naples
-0:46	-0:09	Indian Bay
-0:59	-0:42	Bayport
-0:25	+0:23	Withlacoochee River

Conversions for Tampa Bay Area

High	Low	
+0:49	+0:58	Gandy Bridge
+1:38	+1:55	Courtney Campbell Cswy.
+1:38	+1:55	Safety Harbor
+0:20	+0:22	Ballast Point
+0:07	+0:26	Hillsborough Bay
+0:21	+0:29	McKay Bay Entrance
+0:41	+0:39	Old Port Tampa
-2:27	-2:24	Egmont Key
-2:53	-2:46	Anna Maria, Bradenton Bch
-2:10	-2:19	Anna Maria, City Pier
-1:24	-0:55	Bradenton, Manatee River
-0:30	+0:14	Redfish Pt., Manatee River
-2:22	-1:58	Mullet Key Channel, Skyway
+0:08	+0:17	Shell Point
-0:22	-0:29	Point Pinellas
-1:34	-1:30	Pass-a-Grille Beach
-1:32	-1:05	Gulfport
-1:18	-0:44	St. Pete Beach Causeway
-2:14	-2:04	John's Pass
-1:40	-1:18	Madeira Beach Causeway
-2:00	-1:25	Cortez, Sarasota Bay
-1:38	-0:58	Sarasota Bay
-2:02	-1:38	Venice Inlet
-0:57	-0:40	Englewood, Lemon Bay
-1:27	-0:59	Placida, Gasparilla Sound
+1:38	+1:56	El Jobean, Myakka River
+1:52	+2:30	Shell Point, Peace River
+1:06	+1:27	Punta Gorda, Charlotte Hbr.
-1:12	-1:56	Boca Grande, Charlotte Hbr.
-0:19	+0:26	Pineland, Pine Island
+0:43	+1:28	Matlacha Pass
-0:55	-1:14	Redfish Pass, Captiva Is.
-0:46	-0:20	Captiva, Pine Island Sound
-2:20	-2:28	Captiva, Gulf Side
-0:25	+0:16	Galt Isle, Pine Island Sound
-0:30	-0:44	St. James City, Pine Island
+2:08	+2:44	Fort Myers
+1:15	+2:02	Cape Coral Bridge
+1:08	+1:40	Iona Shores
+0:51	+0:42	Indian Rocks Beach, ICW



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SALTWATER FISHING IN SOUTH FLORIDA

Chasing Lobster, Snook & Redfish

by Captain Justin Searcy

As the sweltering heat of summer begins to fade, September marks a significant transition for saltwater anglers in South Florida. The relentless sun gives way to slightly cooler temperatures, making the water more inviting and the fish more active. For those who know where to look, this month offers some of the best opportunities to catch a variety of species, with Florida Spiny Lobster, snook, and redfish leading the charge.

The September Shift

September is a month of change along the South Florida coast. Water temperatures, which can soar into the upper 80s during the peak of summer, begin to cool down, usually settling into the low to mid-80s. This subtle drop in temperature can make a world of difference for both the fish and the anglers pursuing them.

The cooler waters invigorate species like snook and redfish, which are often found lurking along mangroves and under docks during this time of year. These predatory fish, known for their powerful runs and fierce strikes, become more aggressive as they prepare for the winter months. This makes September an ideal time to target them using live bait or artificial lures, particularly during early morning or late afternoon tides.

Snook & Redfish

For those looking to hook into snook or redfish, the key to success often lies in finding structure. Mangroves and docks offer excellent cover and a steady supply of food, attracting both species in droves. When fishing around mangroves,



live bait such as pilchards or shrimp can be highly effective. Casting your bait close to the roots or into the shadows of the mangroves often entices a lurking snook or redfish to strike.

Under docks, a similar approach can be used. The shade provided by the docks combined with the abundance of small baitfish makes these spots prime hunting grounds. Light tackle is usually sufficient, but be prepared for a tough fight—especially if a big snook decides to take your bait.

Florida Spiny Lobster

While snook and redfish are undoubtedly exciting to catch, September is also a prime time for another popular South Florida favorite—the Florida Spiny Lobster. These extremely delicious crustaceans are still in season dur-

ing September, making them a sought-after target for divers and snorkelers alike.

Hunting for spiny lobsters can be both challenging and rewarding. They are typically found in rocky crevices, coral heads, and under ledges, often in depths ranging from 10 to 30 feet. The use of a "tickle stick" and a net is the most common method for coaxing them out of their hiding spots. Patience and precision are key, as these lobsters are quick to retreat into their shelters at the first sign of danger.



Once you've secured your catch, you'll want to cook it up fresh to truly appreciate the flavors of South Florida's waters. I've got a fantastic recipe for grilling Florida Spiny Lobster with mango and butter that brings out the sweet, delicate flavors of this local delicacy. To get the full recipe and step-by-step instructions, head over to my Instagram page @capt_justin_searcy.

Captains for Clean Water

As anglers, it's essential to recognize the importance of preserving the waters we fish in. That's why I'm a supporter of Captains for Clean Water, a grassroots nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting Florida's waterways and estuaries. Their work focuses on advocating for policies and solutions that address water quality issues, ensuring that future generations can enjoy the same vibrant marine ecosystems we have today.

By supporting initiatives like Captains for Clean Water, we can help maintain the health of our fisheries and ensure that species like snook, redfish, and spiny lobster continue to thrive. I encourage all anglers to get involved and support efforts to protect our waters.

Learn more about how you can make a difference by visiting their website at: www.captainsforcleanwater.org.

September in South Florida is a special time for anglers and seafood lovers alike. Whether you're targeting snook and redfish along the mangroves or diving for spiny lobsters, the opportunities are abundant. And when the day's work is done, head over to my Instagram page for a delicious recipe that's sure to impress. Let's all do our part to protect these precious resources so that we can continue to enjoy them for years to come. 🍷

- Captain Justin Searcy



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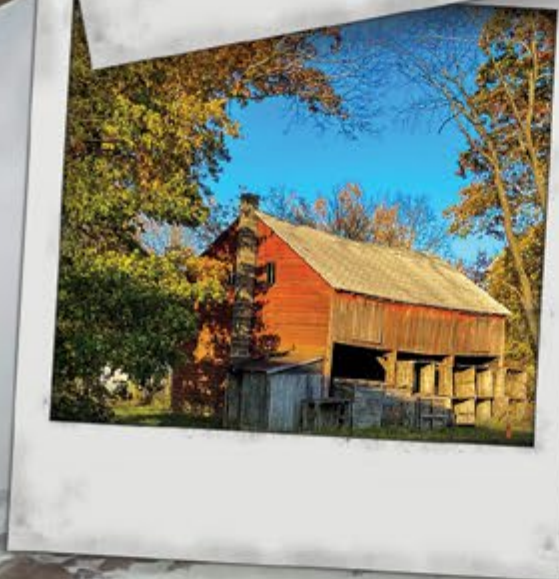
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FISHING ONE OF THE WONDERS OF THE WORLD
NIAGARA FALLS, USA

by Misty Wells

I am here to tell you, "You haven't fished until you have fished Niagara Falls River for the first time." Fishing the Niagara River is truly an unforgettable experience, and I am excited to share my Niagara Falls fishing and trip experience with you.

Of course, first and foremost experiencing the grandeur of the falls is just mind blowing especially in the Fall season. I was fortunate enough to be invited to film my tv show, "Let's Take it Outside" in Niagara Falls and when they told me that we were going to fish the Niagara River, my excitement went through the roof! Before and after my trip to Niagara Falls, I hear the same response when I share my pictures and fishing story with everyone. "I didn't know you could fish the Niagara?" Not only is the fishing fantastic up there but the entire area of Niagara and the surrounding towns are just like you would picture in a movie set.

On day one, we arrived after a nice, uneventful trip from Tampa, Florida into Buffalo, New York and the drive to Niagara was quick and easy. We settled in the hotel and got ready for our dinner that evening at the **Niagara Falls Culinary Institute**. If you are planning a trip to Niagara Falls you must add the Culinary Institute on your list of places to visit, as the dining experience was incredible and the staff is absolutely 5-star!

We made it an early night as we had quite a bit of fishing to do the next day, and Captain Frank said not to be late. Excited to fish with local legend, Captain Frank Cambell, we met him at the dock at 7:00 a.m. and I was ready for some fishing action. Captain Frank is a full-time guide with over 25 years of fishing

experience on Lake Erie, Lake Ontario, and the Niagara River. In between fishing over 200 days a year, Frank still manages to find time to be the Outdoor Promotions Director at **Destination Niagara Falls, USA**.



Fishing the Niagara River in the Fall is just breathtaking, as the fall foliage was in full color and Captain Frank said the fishing was on fire. We started fishing around the mouth of Lake Ontario where the Niagara River and Lake meet, using spinning rods with lures. Captain Frank said we were going to be targeting Lake Trout, Smallmouth Bass and Brown Trout in that particular area. Of course, I had never caught any of those freshwater species, so I was ready to start catching. Right off the bat, Frank started catching a lot of Smallmouth Bass then he landed a large Lake Trout. I was starting to get worried because so far, I had not caught anything, and I was missing the bite.

Now, I fish in Florida and the fish here are much more aggressive, where the Niagara fish are much more polite and you really must pay attention to the bite. We would run up to the mouth of the river then drift back and bounce the jigs off the bottom across the rocks. Once I caught a few Bass, I got a feel for how to work the lures off the bottom and I started to catch up with Frank.

My first big catch was a Lake Trout, and it was huge; at least it was huge to me. Lake Trout have a subtle bite and don't fight too much, so I did not expect the fish to be as big as it was. I was happy, to say the least. As the day went on, we caught a lot of Smallmouth Bass and then Frank landed a nice size Brown Trout. They are just beautiful! As the day went on, I was really hoping to land a Brown Trout like Frank, and finally I got the bite. Frank knew exactly what was

on the other end of the line before I did. I had finally landed a nice Brown Trout and my first day of fishing the Niagara was complete. We had 2 days of fishing planned on the river, but we also wanted to film some of the other attractions and sites at Niagara, so we called it a day.

Next, we loaded up and headed over for a guided tour of **Old Fort Niagara**. Old Fort Niagara is a historic site that offers a stunning combination of original 18th century buildings and dynamic living history recreations. It is unbelievable how well-built things were back then and how this fort has stood the test of time, it's a wonderful historical experience for anyone.

No trip to Niagara would be complete without a cruise on the "**Maid of the Mist**" which is now completely electric. I was so excited that I booked two cruises

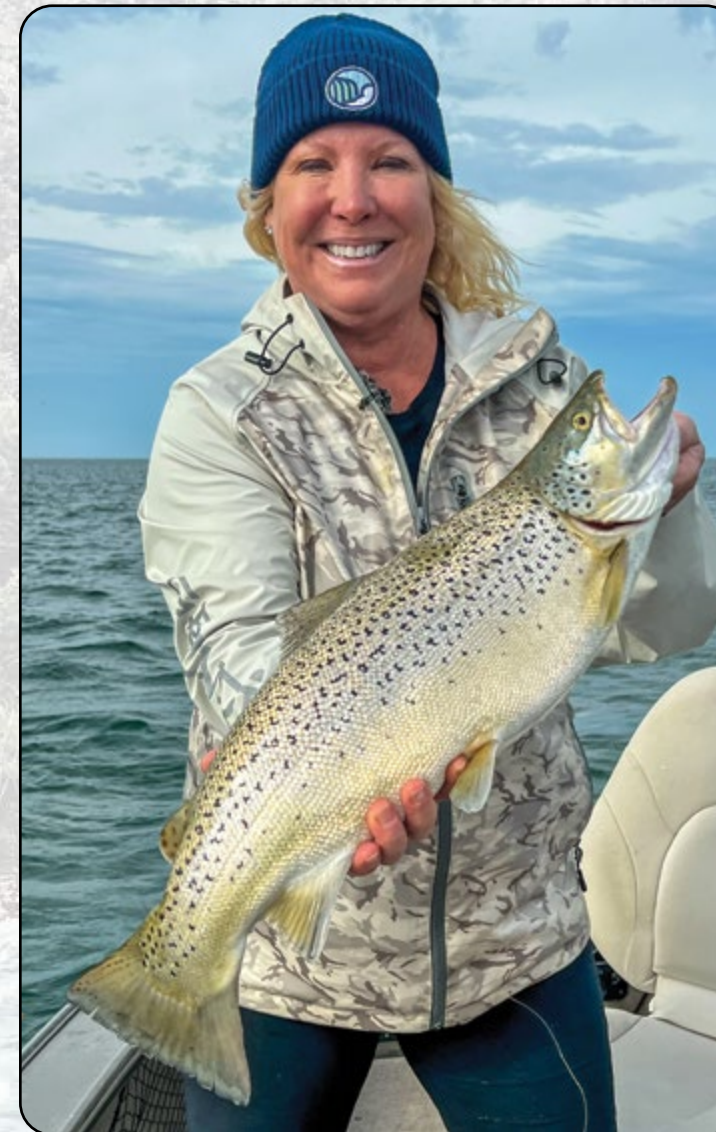


back-to-back that day. The “Maid of the Mist” has been running tours at Niagara Falls since 1846 and they really take you up-close-and-personal to Niagara Falls. You better plan to get wet as that is part of the fun and I must say, the force of the water from Niagara is staggering. During peak flow Niagara Falls flows at more than 700,000 gallons per second with over 280 tons of force hitting the base of the falls. After falling, the water flows North through the Niagara Gorge and into Lake Ontario where we were fishing earlier that day. In 1901, **Annie Edson Taylor** became the first person to survive a barrel ride over the falls when she was 63 years old and she did send her cat first, which also survived.

We also fit in a trip to **Sanger Farms** where this Florida girl went from picking oranges to apples, then dined on some delicious homemade apple pie.

Niagara Falls State Park is America's oldest state park and is known for its jaw-dropping scenic beauty. The fishing begins in **Devil's Hole**, a few miles below Niagara Falls, then the river flows eight miles downstream to where its mouth empties into Lake Ontario. Lower Niagara River is known for its Chinook Salmon, Steelhead, and Walleye and all those species were on my list. We started day two of fishing in Devil's Hole, and I was hoping to catch a Walleye and Salmon on my last day. The water flow is much faster in the upper Niagara, so your drift fishing is quite different than the lower waters. Captain would drive us upriver, tell you to get ready and then the quick drift downstream would begin.

While fishing, we were using a similar setup as the previous day; spinning rods paired with silver and green lures both bounced along the bottom.



I can't believe I was able to complete my “Niagara Fishing Bucket List” in just two days: a Lake Trout, Brown Trout, Smallmouth Bass, Salmon and Walleye. That night we dined on our fresh caught Walleye at **Casa Antica** a family-run Italian restaurant in **Historic Lewiston**. Casa Antica serves authentic Sicilian dishes with a farm-to-table flair that is worth the trip just to have dinner! Mangia!

Now, I have heard people say, “The Niagara River is one of the best, if not the best fisheries in North America.” And I can now confirm that the Niagara really is an amazing fishery because of the different species, the numbers and size of the fish year-round.

Fishing the Niagara River truly is fishing magic and let's be honest, the scenery's not bad either! 🍷

In the Niagara, the fish will congregate wherever the current has a break in it or where they can feed. My first catch in the upper Niagara was a nice Steelhead Salmon. The fishing was on fire again that day, as we caught and released a lot of fish. But, I was still hoping for my first Walleye. Par for the course, Frank caught a nice Walleye before me and finally my fishing dream came true; I landed one as the last fish of the day.

Misty Wells Award Winning Producer & Host of “Let's Take it Outside” airing on Discovery Channel & 12 networks to over 220 million viewers Worldwide. Outdoor Pro & Outdoor Travel Writer.

Founder of “A Reel Future” non-profit devoted to teaching the passion of fishing & conservation to foster children, over 3,800 children & counting. Visit www.mistywells.com for more info.

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The Gulf of Mexico is a dream for saltwater fishing lovers. Both beginners and experts will find plenty to enjoy here. Redfish and snook are popular catches known for their strong, spirited fights. You'll find them in shallow waters

and estuaries, making them pretty accessible. If you're up for a challenge, Redfish, renowned for their strong fight and impressive size, are a staple in the region. Snook, another favorite, provide a thrilling catch with their elusive behavior and powerful runs.

FRESHWATER ADVENTURES

Freshwater fishing in Florida's Sports Coast offers a diverse and rewarding experience for anglers of all skill levels. The numerous lakes and rivers are teeming with a variety of fish species. Anglers can expect to find largemouth bass in abundance, along with crappie and bluegill in the lakes. The rivers provide excellent opportunities to catch catfish and various panfish species. Whether you're casting from the shore or drifting along in a boat, there are plenty of spots that deliver both thrilling catches and serene settings.

For those who prefer river fishing, the Anclote River and Cotee River



are excellent picks. They're perfect for catching catfish and various panfish. With their diverse ecosystems, these rivers are great for anglers of all experience levels.

No matter your skill level, Florida's Sports Coast in Pasco County has a wealth of fishing opportunities waiting for you. With its variety of fish species and fishing spots, it's the perfect destination for an unforgettable day on the water. ☑

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Captain Sergio Atanes

September is the month to start looking ahead to the fall fishing season! It's the time of the year that Snook start moving back into the backwater flats after a long breeding season. Redfish will also be abundant and still prefer

cut fresh bait on the bottom in early morning or late afternoon. Flounder action picks up this month, as well, and a light 1/8th ounce jighead tipped with a live shrimp is a sure bet when fished along the edges of channels or around docks. Spanish Mackerel will start the migration back into the gulf, but still plenty of action to be had with these toothy critters on your incoming tides.



Captain George Hastick

September marks the start of cooling off, but it is still a hot month with water temperatures in the mid-80s. At some of the bridges like the Gandy, Howard Franklin and Courtney Campbell, the Black Drum will still be around. Mackerel will also be around the bridges, range markers and reefs between the Skyway and Gandy bridges. Speckled Trout will be in 6-8 feet of water over grassy & shell areas with good sand holes. Snook will be under docks, under the mangroves and will bite best when the water is moving. Look for Redfish to be under the mangroves but also on the flats in 3-5 feet of water near oyster mounds and on grass flats with plenty of sand holes.

ABOUT THE CAPTAINS

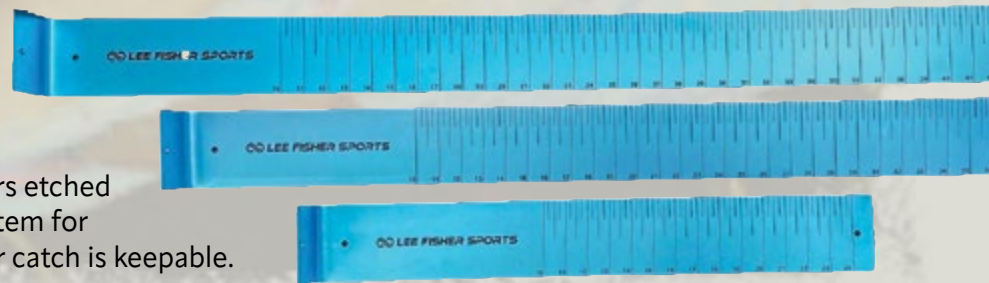
Captain Sergio and Captain George Hastick fish the Florida waters, specializing in and around the West Coast of Florida and Tampa Bay. Their show, Fishing Adventures Florida, is about two captains sharing their knowledge and experience of the local waters. Encouraging others to share in their love of what the outdoors has to offer. Their goal is to educate, entertain and share the experience of fishing opportunities the state has to offer.

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WADE FISHING ESSENTIALS

by Dave Ulgenalp

Rods, reels, line, and lures are all gear essentials for sure, but if you want to be the best and safest wade fisherman you can be, there are a few accessories that should be considered essential as well, when you head out.

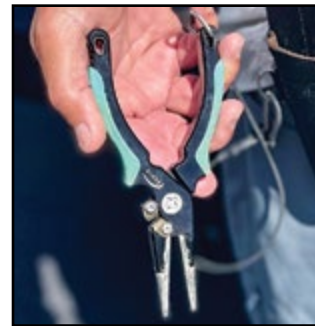


Gear Bag: you need something to hold lures, leader, and water and to attach your pliers and fish grip. There are many options to choose from, including back packs, chest packs, waist packs and fanny packs. Over the years, I've tried every style of bag and pack available, made by a variety of reputable companies, and have ended up a fan of and



highly recommend the Sonora 8.5 Liter Waist Pack made by Outdoor Products. This pack can be purchased on walmart.com for \$22.97. It's big enough to hold everything I need but not so big that it's a burden to carry or find what I'm looking for. It has two pouches that can be used to carry water bottles, plenty of pockets to help organize and separate your gear and has straps to attach pliers and a fish grip. I've found the bag to be durable and the polyester zippers reliable with just a quick rinse of freshwater after being used. It's not waterproof but anything inside that shouldn't get wet should be sealed in a waterproof box or bag.

Pliers: removing hooks from toothy and or deeply hooked fish and cutting line are tasks that you will be faced with routinely and you will need a pair of pliers designed specifically for the task. Pliers made of high-quality aluminum, stainless steel or titanium will hold up to use in salt water, are light and should last for years if cared for properly. Line cutters with replaceable blades are a must, as is a sheath for the pliers that can be clipped on to or threaded through a belt. Prices range from \$15 to \$500 and vary depending upon the type and quality of metal used. I've been using Danco pliers for as long as I can remember and have never been disappointed in the quality and value



they offer on a wide variety of products. I recommend you consider the 6.5" Pro Series Plier, which retails for \$69.99 on danco-pliers.com. These are high quality pliers and a great value. They are made of Aircraft Grade Aluminum with titanium jaw inserts, have replaceable Titanium Cobalt cutters, rubber grips and come with a leather sheath and lanyard.



Booties: it's likely you will be wading in areas with a variety of bottom conditions and sea life, including many that can cause serious injury and make for an uncomfortable experience if

your feet are unprotected. Among the hazards you are likely to encounter are oysters, rocks, shells, tree limbs, broken glass, and stingrays. I strongly recommend that you don't wade barefoot and buy a pair of booties made specifically for wade fishing and/or diving. Booties should be light, offer a neoprene upper, rigid plastic or thick rubber sole, quality polyester zippers and cover the ankle.

Like every other piece of fishing gear, there are many options to choose from over a wide price range. This is one accessory that I don't compromise on quality. Typical fails of less expensive or lower quality booties include lack of comfort, broken or stuck zippers, uppers

that come unglued from the soles, split or broken soles, and tears in neoprene uppers. I'm always on the lookout for a better bootie and haven't found a pair that I prefer more than the Zipit Flats Bootie, made by Simms and available for \$129.99 on simmsfishing.com. They fit true to size if you are wet wading without socks or with a thin polypropylene sock but consider ordering a size larger if you prefer to wear a thicker wading sock, and two sizes larger if you will be wearing them over stocking foot waders.

Next month, I will offer my thoughts and recommendations on more essential accessories, including waders and sunglasses.

Until then, *get in the water* and start fishing! 🎣

Dave Ulgenalp, aka "Wader Dave," is Tampa Bay's Premier wade fishing guide. You can find out more about him and book a trip at www.wadersguide.com or follow @waderdave on Instagram. Also, be sure to check out the numerous videos he's featured in on SaltStrong.com and YouTube by searching for Wader Dave.





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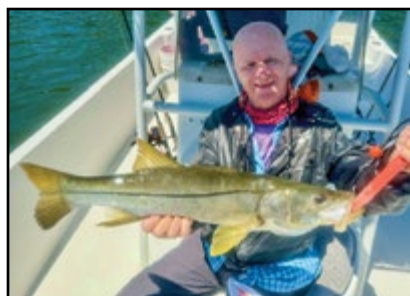
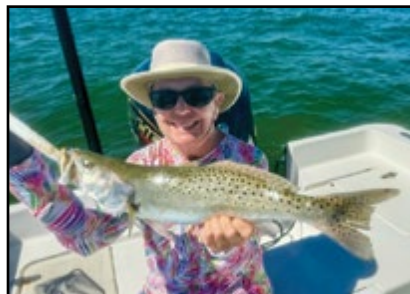
TALES FROM THE OLD GUY

by David Mallory

Good ol' George is a dedicated man, and the very best captain in all the land. George tells his clients, both old and young, "Pay close attention and we'll have some fun".

After we celebrated Memorial Day and I played TAPS on our street to remember the many dedicated military personnel who gave so much to keep our country free, we decided to brave the heat and get in some "reel time." The first stop was a rock pile a few miles from shore. We started catching fish as soon as the bait was in the water. Mangrove snapper was the target and they fortunately got the message. We each caught some big ones which would make perfect fillets. we don't spend too much time at a spot if we are catching what we want for a few meals, so as to leave some for the next time.

Our next spot was another big rock pile. On the edges, we caught some speckled trout. It took quite a few minutes before they got sick of seeing our bait float by them with the



tide. Boom! Then we started catching them. We were having so much fun that another captain, who wasn't having so much fun, left! That is not unusual with George. He catches fish when others don't. We think alike and we often talk about what to do if they aren't biting; change bait, line, hooks and presentation to make them bite. Sometimes, I will suggest something and George is already thinking of it. He can think like a fish, but I can't. My dad used to say "Think like a worm"! That worked well in Vermont for brook trout but it doesn't work with white bait in Florida.

As we moved to new locations, Pauline was catching different species. Dave wasn't! We tried a number of other places. Every one was productive and fun. The rock piles and reefs had snapper & grouper and the deeper water had others. Pauline was having fun catching a wide variety; however, Dave wasn't. I was holding my own for fish count though. We still had time to try a few more spots and George wanted to try another place for snook. Pauline is the snook queen which is her favorite fish to catch. When we got there, we had company. We didn't fish the "good spots" until they left. We fished the mangroves and started catching snook. They love to take you into the trees and break the line. We were fighting to get them out and didn't loose any, but every one was a fight to keep them away from the trees.

George wanted to try another spot where we might catch a redfish. That would give us an "Inshore Slam" (snook, trout, redfish). We had both done it before, but it is always fun to do again. We both had trout and snook, but no reds. We were catch-



ing snook at every stop, and Pauline would catch something unusual as we moved from spot to spot. Dave didn't! We tried a few more spots and caught many snook. Finally, Pauline hooked a fish. As she fought it, George yelled "It's a red. Keep your pole up and reel, reel, reel!" She played it to perfection and George got it in the net. He said "You got your slam".

We kept moving to different spots and catching fish at every spot. George could often see the fish when we arrived and could guide the boat to where we could fish. He knows that I don't jump around the boat like I did years ago so he tries to put the boat where we can both catch fish.

As I have mentioned before, we like to keep track of what we catch and record it when we get home. It is fun to look back over the years to compare days and years. This day, Pauline caught 18 fish, but 7 different species: Snapper, Grouper, Trout, Jacks, Ladyfish, Snook and Redfish. Not to be outdone, I caught 19 fish, but only 4 different species. So, it was another fun day with some excellent "reel time," beautiful weather, a great Captain and happy fisher-people. ☑

Dave can be reached by email at: David_Mallory@msn.com

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GEARING UP FOR THE FALL

by Captain Sergio Atanes

September is an exciting time for me as everything starts to kick in and if all goes well, the weather starts giving us a break with some cooler mornings and less thunderstorms. The perfect time to start fishing again! One thing I do every year in September is I go through all of my fishing gear including rods, reels, lures, soft baits and fishing line to make sure they are ready for the fall.

Here are a few tips:

- Give your reels a good cleaning by loosening the drags and lubricating the gears. If you don't feel comfortable doing this there are several good tackle centers in the Tampa Bay area who can service your reels at a reasonable price.
- Check your line guides on the rods for any scratches or nicks. Use cotton swabs or borrow a pantyhose from your wife when she's not looking and cut it into small strips. It will last a long time, so don't worry, she won't miss one pantyhose. Now run the cotton swab or piece of pantyhose through the guide. If the pantyhose clings or the cotton sticks to the guide, replace the guide or risk losing a

fish later. A slight scratch or cut on the guide will cut your line under pressure from a pulling fish.



- At the end of the day, never put your hook on the guide, as this can and will scratch the guide. Instead, take an electrical nylon tie with a screw hole built in and place it just above the top grip on the rod. This allows a place for the hook to sit. Many new rods now come with a hook holder but many of us have older rods and this method will make your guides last longer and lose less fish.

- Most anglers take too much tackle on a fishing trip. Remember the last time you went on a vacation with your wife, and she brought half the closet along? There are many new small soft-sided tackle boxes that can handle all your needs. I suggest you leave most of your tackle at home and replenish your tackle box as need-

ed. In addition, a small waterproof plastic divided tray with a watertight seal lid works great for hooks and small sinkers to keep on the console of the boat and use as they are needed.



- Braided fishing line should be replaced at least once a year. Here is a suggestion; always fill your spool full of line. Do not add backing on your first fill and depending on how often you use your tackle, every couple of months, reverse your line on the spool by adding some monofilament line to the bottom of the spool as this brings you line up back to your starting point. Also keeps your casting distance up. Try it and save money.

Now that the "honey do's" are done and your tackle is ready for fishing, remember fishing heats up as the water temperature drops.

And, September will bring lower water temperatures and an increase in fish activity. Look for snook cruising the mangrove shorelines; flounder will hit jigs tipped with shrimp bounced on the bottom around sand patches in the grass flats. Mackerel action steps up a notch and redfish will move further out into the flats during high tides.

Some Bay Area hot spots:

The Big Island on the Northwest side of Howard Frankland Bridge. Although the charts show a 1-foot depth, the area was dredged out in the 60s and has 8 to 10-foot depths.

The Getaway Restaurant channel is on the Southwest side of the Gandy Bridge. This channel is deep and always warmer due to the outflow of the power plant. Great fishing for trout, sheepshead and a great place to take the kids for ladyfish and jacks.

The VFW channel on the northeast side of Port Tampa. Be careful, the area outside of the entrance holds a lot of rocks but a great spot for sheepshead, redfish and trout through the fall & winter months.

Weedon Island holds many secret spots still left to be found. It's the "Gem of upper Tampa Bay" with mudholes, grass flats, oyster beds & creeks. Learn this area well and you will get rewarded.



The Gandy Bridge is often overlooked and takes some time to find the areas of the bridge that has rubble from the early construction days. There you will find the big redfish, trout and mangrove snapper.

Good fishing and tight lines. ☑

Captain Sergio Atanes is Host of the Fishing Adventures Florida Show on Waypoint TV, Carbon TV and YouTube. He is owner of Reelfishy.com fishing charters and can be reached by calling 813-973-7132 or by email at: atanes@msn.com.

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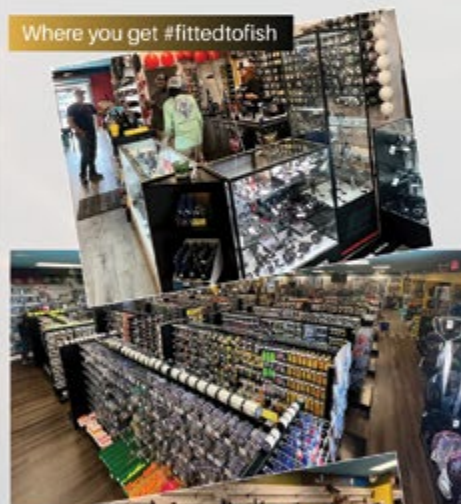
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