SELECTING THE RIGHT GEAR: A BREAKDOWN BY SPECIES

**BONEFISH**

**ROD:** 8 wt. (Fast enough and stiff enough to cast a line in windy conditions)

**REEL:** Anodized, corrosion-resistant saltwater model. Should be able to hold a full line plus 200 yards + of 30 lb. backing. A high quality, smooth disc drag is important.

**LINE:** Tropical Floating Bonefish Line (WF8 or WF9)

**LEADERS:** 9’ - 12’ tapered leaders, 10 lb. with extra spools of 10, 12, and 16 lb. saltwater tippet. Fluorocarbon is also recommended in the saltwater. Use 16 lb. tippet for big bones!

**FLIES:** Be sure to have a good selection of bonefish flies in a wide variety of sizes, colors and sink rates. The standard sizes for bonefish flies in Cuba are #2 through #6, with a general rule being the shallower the water, the smaller and lighter the fly.

**PERMIT**

**ROD:** 9 or 10 wt. (Fast enough and stiff enough to cast a line in windy conditions)

**REEL:** Anodized, corrosion-resistant saltwater model. Should be able to hold a full line plus 250 yards + of 20 lb. or 30 lb. backing. A high quality, smooth disc drag is essential.

**LINE:** Tropical Floating Bonefish Line or Tarpon Line (WF9 or WF10)

**LEADERS:** 9’ - 12’ tapered leaders, 16 to 20 lb. with extra spools of 20 lb. saltwater tippet. Fluorocarbon is recommended in the saltwater.

**FLIES:** Bring a large number of the Cuban Avalon fly patterns in a variety of different sink rates. You will also want a basic selection of crab patterns in a variety of sizes, colors and weights. Tan, light olive, dark olive and shades of brown are the most effective colors for crab patterns.

**TARPON**

**ROD:** 11 or 12 wt. (Stiff, fast action)

**REEL:** Anodized, corrosion-resistant saltwater model. Should be able to hold a fly line plus 300 yards + of 30 lb. backing. A high quality, smooth disc drag is essential.

**LINE:** Tropical Floating Tarpon Line (WF11 or WF12). On a second spool, we recommend an Intermediate Sinking line for deeper water.

**LEADERS:** Pre-tied leaders with a 16 to 20 lb. class tippet and 60 to 100 lb. shock tippet. A tarpon stretcher is a great help if you are planning on doing a lot of tarpon fishing.

**FLIES:** A basic selection of tarpon flies in variety of colors and materials. Sizes 1/0 and 2/0 will cover most tarpon situations throughout Cuba.

**BARRACUDA, JACKS, ETC.**

**ROD:** 9 or 10 wt. (Fast enough and stiff enough to cast a line in windy conditions)

**REEL:** Anodized, corrosion-resistant saltwater model. Should be able to hold a full line plus 250 yards + of 20 lb. or 30 lb. backing.

**LINE:** Tropical Floating Bonefish Line or Tarpon Line (WF9 or WF10)

**LEADERS:** Leaders tied with straight mono: 20 to 30 lb. For barracuda, a heavy 40 lb. wire leader is recommended.

**FLIES:** Bring an assorted collection of Clouser Minnows, Lefty’s Deceiver’s, gummy minnows, poppers and Puglisi Peanut Butter-style flies.
Having the right gear and equipment can make all the difference in the world when it comes to a successful angling experience. A few thoughts on some of the more important pieces of equipment:

**Sunglasses**
Perhaps the most important piece of equipment you’ll bring with you. Spotting fish in the saltwater and in the bright light is crucial and can make all the difference in the success of a trip. Buy the very best polarized lenses you can. (We recommend an amber, copper or brown lens.) Find a pair that will shape to your face and block out as much peripheral side and top light as possible. Costa del Mar, Maui Jim, Smith and several other high-end brands are all excellent choices. Bring a second pair in case the first one breaks or is lost.

**Rain Gear**
Rain is always a possibility in the tropics, and the weather can change quickly on any given day. While a full rain suit is a good idea, a rain jacket with a hood is the absolute minimum you need to bring. Be sure that the material you choose is waterproof and not just water resistant. We recommend something lightweight that can pack easily into a side pocket of a boat bag or camera bag. Pack a couple of large garbage bags inside your boat bag as well, which can be useful in covering your gear and other items in a downpour.

**Footwear / Wading Boots**
If you are headed to a destination in Cuba that offers wading opportunities, you’ll want a quality pair of wading boots. Coral, sea urchin spines and other sharp objects are a factor on the flats, so footwear that features hard, rigid soles is a must. Saltwater flats booties or boots such as the Simms Flats Sneaker are the most effective. Pack a couple of pairs of long, athletic-type socks as well to prevent chaffing and cuts caused by sand inside your footwear.

**Sunscreen**
Nothing can ruin a trip faster than a severe tropical sunburn! Bring sunscreen that has a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 30. Sunscreen should be both waterproof and sweat proof. Lip protection with a high SPF is also essential. You may want to bring an additional bottle of spray-on sunscreen. Wash your hands thoroughly after applying sunscreen, as saltwater fish will quickly refuse any fly that smells like Coppertone. Do not handle your fly, tippet or leader until you have washed your hands or scrubbed them with sand and saltwater.

**Camera Equipment**
You will definitely want to bring your camera gear in the boat, so be sure that it is safe and protected at all times. A good waterproof bag or hard-sided box is a must, as salt spray and water are a constant factor. Be sure to bring an extra memory card, spare batteries, charging cords and a soft cloth for cleaning your lens. Here at Yellow Dog, we’re big fans of the waterproof Pelican cases.

**Clothing**
Pack light, pack casual, and minimize the amount of clothing that you bring. Everything in Cuba is casual, and shorts and flip-flops are the standard in the areas where you’ll be fishing. Shorts, a pair or lightweight long pants, a few fishing shirts, and a single sweatshirt or lightweight sweater will get you through the week no problem. If you do run out of clean clothes during your stay, all of the hotels and live-aboard boats offer laundry services for a small fee. One good tip when packing is to lay out all of your clothing and then divide in half the amount of clothing you initially thought you would need.
# CUBA PACKING LIST

## FISHING GEAR / TACKLE

- **Bonefish Rod** (8 wt.)
- **Permit Rod** (9 or 10 wt.)
- **Tarpon Rod** (11 or 12 wt.)
- **Travel Rod Tube / Rod Carrier**
- **Fly Reels & Extra Spools** (to match rods)
- **Extra Fly Lines** (floating / sink tip)
- **Bonefish / Permit Leaders** (10-20 lb)
- **Tarpon Leaders** (3 - 16# class, 80# shock)
- **Standard Tippet Spools** (10#, 16#, 20#)
- **Fluorocarbon Tippet** (10#, 16#)
- **Butt Section Material** (40#, 60#)
- **Barracuda Leaders / Steel Wire**
- **Boat Bag or Gear Bag** (carry-on)
- **Small Wading Pack / Hip Pack**
- **Fly Boxes and Flies**
  - Bonefish Flies
  - Permit Flies
  - Tarpon and Snook Flies
  - Barracuda Flies / Poppers
- **Polarized Sunglasses** (2 pairs)
- **Sunglass Straps / Croakies**
- **Lens Clothes / Glasses Wipes**
- **Wading Boots / Flats Booties**
- **Socks** (for under wading boots)
- **Pliers and Holster with Lanyard Cord**
- **Nippers on Lanyard / Zinger**
- **Hemostats / Forceps** (5”- 6”)
- **Neoprene Reel Cases** (for boat)
- **Nail Knot Tool**
- **Line Cleaner / Line Dressing**
- **Reel Oil / Reel Lube**
- **Mini Flashlight / Extra Batteries**
- **Camera / Batteries / Memory Cards**
- **Superglue** for leader cuts
- **Waterproof Sunscreen** - at least SPF 30
- **Lip Protection**
- **Insect Repellent**
- **Rain Gear**
- **Snack Items / Energy Bars**
- **Dry Bag / Waterproof Bag for Boat**
- **Large Garbage Bag / Ziplock Bags** (3)
- **Fishing Hat**
- **Guide Tips / Gratuities**
- **Water Bottle**
### PERSONAL ITEMS
- Plane Ticket
- Travel Itinerary
- Valid Passport / Photocopies of Passport
- Wallet / Credit Cards
- Cash (Euros or Canadian Dollars)
- Important Phone Numbers
- Personal Toiletries Kits
- Small Personal First Aid Kit
- Pepto Bismol / Imodium A.D.
- Books / Reading Material
- Notebook / Paper / Pencil
- iPod / iPad with Headphones & Charger
- Aloe / After-Sun Lotion
- Aspirin
- Cell Phone with Charger

### CLOTHING ITEMS
- Long Sleeved Fishing Shirts (2-3)
- Lightweight Supplex Pants (2)
- Short Sleeved Casual Shirts (2)
- T-Shirts (2-3)
- Sandals / Lightweight Casual Shoes
- Lightweight Shorts (2)
- Fishing Hat
- Swimsuit
- Sweatshirt / Light Fleece for Evenings
- Bandana / Sun Buff
- Underwear / Socks

### OPTIONAL ITEMS
- Eyeglasses / Contacts
- Tarpon Stretcher Case (pre-loaded)
- Travel Fly Tying Kit / Travel Vise
- “Essentials Kit” (emergency repair kit)
- Travel Guide Books
- Prescription Medicines
- Electrical Adaptor for 2-Pronged Outlets
- Travel Insurance Documents
- Laptop with Charger
- Specialty Alcohol/Beverages
- Sungloves

### NOTES

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---
SELECTING THE RIGHT FLIES

Many people feel that the most important factor in proper fly selection when fishing the saltwater flats is color; specifically how the color of the fly relates to the color of the bottom. Many of the small creatures that live on the Cuban flats have evolved to blend in with their surroundings, camouflaging themselves to easily hide in the sand, coral and turtle grass. Consider that a bright white crab on a dark, grassy bottom would stick out like a sore thumb and would not last long! For this reason, many experts feel that it is important to match the color of the fly being fished to the general color of the bottom — be it grass, coral, mud or sand.

When it comes to selecting the size of the fly, a good general rule is the shallower the water, the smaller the fly. While this is not always the case, a smaller fly that makes a smaller splash when it hits the water is much less likely to spook fish feeding in skinny, shallow water. It is a good idea to have a variety of fly sizes, as you will encounter a number of different fishing situations and scenarios throughout Cuban waters. Larger flies can be fished in deeper water and on windier days, when more surface chop hides the splash of the fly as it's presented. In this particular saltwater environment, you will also want a selection of bonefish and permit flies that are tied with weed guards, as turtle grass and coral can be a factor. Weed guards tied with mono seem to be the most effective. These weed guards can easily be cut off and removed if desired.

In addition to size and color, the weight and sink rate of flies is crucial. When fishing Cuba, your permit and bonefish fly boxes should contain flies with at least three different sink rates: Unweighted, slightly weighted, and heavy. The unweighted “skinny water” flies are tied as light as possible, usually without eyes or with plastic bead chain eyes. Fish these patterns in extremely shallow water or over flats where the turtle grass is thick. (Usually in water that is less than one foot deep.) For “slightly weighted” flies, use standard bead chain eyes or micro-barbell eyes. These flies are designed for water that is one to three feet deep, where turtle grass and coral can be an issue.

Finally, have a selection of heavy flies, effective in water that is greater than three feet deep. Be sure that the heavy category includes smaller hook sizes as well as larger patterns. In skinny water, the splash of a larger, heavier fly tends to be more perceptible, especially to fish that are by nature extremely spooky. In situations like this, very little weight is required to sink the fly a few inches, and a delicate presentation is essential. When fishing deeper water situations, the splash of a fly is much less perceptible, and a weighted fly is the only thing that can get to the bottom fast enough. When your set-up is rigged and you first arrive on the flats, be sure to drop your fly and leader into the water next to the boat. Count how long it takes the fly to reach the bottom and you will have figured out the sink rate and how far you will need to lead a fish when casting.

For tarpon, a basic selection of 1/0 and 2/0 flies in a variety of colors will cover almost any situation encountered in Cuban waters. Be sure that your tarpon flies are tied on super high-quality, chemically-sharpened hooks. A razor-sharp hook point is essential for penetrating the rock-hard mouth of tarpon. We are big fans of the Owner AKI hooks and similar models from Gamakatsu. As a general rule, you can fish dark colored flies (black, purple, brown) on cloudy, overcast days or when the water is murky or stirred up from the wind. Fish brightly colored or light-colored flies (white, yellow, orange, chartreuse) on sunny days when the water is clear and the visibility is good. You will also want to have a handful of smaller tarpon flies that are tied weedless for fishing in and among the mangroves. Be sure to have a couple of white, red and pearlescent surface poppers as well.
BONEFISH FLY PATTERNS

Gotcha #4, 6, 8
Pearl, Gold or McVay’s

Crazy Charlie #4, 6
Tan, White, Pink, Chartreuse

Missing Link #4, 6
Olive, Tan

Sili Legs #4, 6

Skinny Water Gotcha #4, 6, 8
(No Eyes)

Turneffe Crab #6
Olive, Tan

Puff Fly #4, 6
Pink, Tan

Squimp #6, 8

Puglisi Bahamas Shrimp #1, 6
Assorted Colors

Borski’s Bonefish Slider #4, 6

Bonefish Bitters #6, 8
Amber, Olive

Christmas Island Special #6, 8
Pink, Pearl, Orange

Gotcha Clouser #4, 6

Horror Bonefish Fly #4, 6

BONEFISH FLY PATTERNS

TARPOON FLY PATTERNS

Rabbit Strip Black Death #1/0, 3/0

Traditional Black Death #1/0, 3/0

Deceivers #1, 2/0
Assorted Colors

Cockroach (Traditional) #1/0, 3/0

Puglisi Mullet Fly #2/0, 3/0
Assorted Colors

Enrico Puglisi E.P. Crab #2, 8
3-Tone, Tan, Olive, Sand, Brown

Enrico Puglisi Permit Crab #1
3-Tone, Tan, Olive, Sand

Abel Anchovy #3/0

Avalon Shrimp Fly #2, 4

Clouzzer Deep Minnows #2/0, 2

Tarpon Toad #2/0, 3/0
Tan, Black Death, Purple/Black, Brown

Deceivers #1, 2/0
Assorted Colors

Pearly Poppers #2/0, 2

Traditional Black Death #1/0, 3/0

Enrico Puglisi Peanut Butter Fly #2/0
Black/Purple, Black/Red, Grey/White, Chartreuse/White

Saltwater Minnows #2/0

OTHER FLY PATTERNS (Snook, Jacks, Snapper, Sharks, Etc.)

Clouser Deep Minnows #2/0, 2

Big Fish Deceivers #2/0
(Tandem Hooks)

Barracuda Needlefish #2/0, 4/0
Assorted Colors

Pearly Poppers #2/0, 2

Saltwater Poppers #2/0
Assorted Colors

Gummy Minnows #2, 6

©Yellow Dog Flyfishing Adventures ● (406) 585-8667 or (888) 777-5060 ● info@yellowdogflyfishing.com
PURCHASING OR TYING YOUR FLIES FOR CUBA

Keep in mind that the “must have fly patterns” will vary depending on the day, the conditions, and the guide that you are fishing with. A pattern that one guide swears by and loves, another guide may avoid. When a guide opens your box that you’ve assembled using our enclosed fly lists and tells you that nothing you have will work, know that is not at all true. Just like guides in Argentina, Montana, and everywhere else in the world, fly “favorites” vary among guides. None of the lodges in Cuba sell flies, which means that you will need to plan on bringing down what you will be fishing for the week. The exception to this is Cayo Largo, where you will may given a small section of Avalon shrimp flies upon arrival.

If you need help in purchasing flies prior to your trip, then we recommend that you take the enclosed fly list into your specialty fly shop and see what they have. (Always support your local fly shop!) That said, many smaller, regional fly shops will NOT have the exact saltwater patterns that you need. If that is the case, then we are happy to recommend a select group of retailers that can assist you with the right fly patterns. Be sure to tell them that you are going on a Yellow Dog adventure! That way they can provide recommendations to accommodate your needs based on your exact destination and season.

Bonefish Bitters
Amber, Olive
#6, 8

Crazy Charlie
Tan, White, Pink, Chartreuse
#4, 6, 8

Avalon Shrimp Fly
#2, 4, 6

Christmas Island Special
Yellow, Pearl, Orange
#6, 8

Bauer Crab
Olive, Tan
#4, 6

McVay’s Gotcha
#2, 4, 6, 8

Gotcha Clouser
#4, 6

Puff Fly
Pink, Tan
#4, 6

Puglisi E.P. Crab
3-Tone, Tan, Olive, Sand, Brown
#2, 8

Turneffe Crab
Olive, Tan
#4, 6, 8

Raghead Crab
#2, 4, 6

Puglisi Permit Crab
3-Tone, Tan, Olive, Sand
#1

Puglisi Mullet Fly
Assorted Colors
#2/0, 3/0

Puglisi Bahamas Shrimp
Assorted Colors
#1, 6

Puglisi Peanut Butter
Black/Purple, Black/Red, Grey/White, Chartreuse/White
#2/0

Gummy Minnow
Assorted Colors
#2, 6, 8

Tarpon Toad
Assorted Colors
#1/0, 3/0

Cockroach
(Traditional)
#1/0, 3/0

Traditional Black Death
#1/0, 3/0

Pearly Popper
#2/0, 2