

Deep Sea Sportfishing on the VOYAGER



2017 Stand-Up Canyon Tuna Fishing Guide

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The **VOYAGER Stand-up Tuna Fishing Guide** contains a wealth of information, instructions and suggestions to help make your tuna trip more productive. We want you to know how we run our trips and what to expect... you will have a better and more productive time. Our Guide will help you improve your chances of getting tuna in the boat.

The VOYAGER sails from Fishermen's Supply Co. Dock, 69 Channel Drive, Point Pleasant Beach, NJ 08742. Your captains are Jeff Gutman and John Schaible.

Reservations are required for all VOYAGER tuna trips. Call 732-295-3019 or visit our web site at www.VoyagerFishing.com.

— download the VOYAGER Stand-up Guide —

THE TRIP

Our regular offshore canyon tuna trips on the VOYAGER last approximately 22 hours. We leave the dock for our offshore canyon trips exactly at the scheduled departure time... we won't wait for latecomers. Reservations are required and we encourage you to make them early. Your choice of fishing spot at the rail is based on when we receive your fare. First paid, first served. We strictly limit the number of fishermen to 26 per trip. Your fare includes a sleeping bunk at no extra charge.

You MUST be at the dock at least one hour prior to the scheduled departure time and present for a roll call. During the roll call we will allow you to select your rail position and bunk (in order of payment received). If you are not present for the roll call, we will skip by you (and you may not get the spot you wanted.)

The VOYAGER generally sails if winds are less than 25 knots, but rarely sails when the winds are blowing above 25 knots. No matter what the weather forecast, please call the VOYAGER office at 732-295-3019 after 12:00 PM Noon on the day of your trip to find out if we will be sailing that afternoon. However, the decision to cancel a trip MAY be made at the dock. In the event of a cancelation, we will try to rebook your trip in order of payment received.

Your fare includes a bunk, hooks, monofilament leader material (not fluorocarbon), and barrel swivels. Egg sinkers and other fishing supplies are available at the nearby Fishermen's Supply Co. tackle shop. If you need it, we can rent you a Penn stand-up rod and 2-speed Penn reel outfit for \$25. All fares must be paid in full when you make your reservation. NO REFUNDS unless we can resell your seat or we cancel the trip.

If WE cancel your trip for any reason, you may choose to receive a full refund or reschedule to a later trip date. If YOU need to cancel and we can rebook your spot, you will be given a full refund. If you must cancel your trip, please give us as much notice as possible, but we need at least 7 days and we make no guarantees.

We set the fares for our offshore tuna trips early in the year. Consequently, we may add a \$10 surcharge to your fare to help defray unexpected increases in fuel costs.

THE BOAT

The **VOYAGER** is an 100-foot all aluminum supercruiser powered by three turbocharged diesel engines making her fast, spacious and very comfortable for deep sea fishing. Cruising speed is about 18 knots and the top speed is 28 knots. Our primary fishing location is the Hudson Canyon, which is 90 nautical miles from Point Pleasant Beach. This means it is about a five hour ride to the fish.

The **VOYAGER** is U.S. Coast Guard inspected and equipped with the latest fish-finding sonar, communications and navigation equipment including two color fish-finders, three ship-to-shore radios, two radars, three GPS satellite positioning systems, autopilot, seawater temperature gauges, and a computer-based chart and plotting system.

ACCOMODATIONS

On boarding, you may select a sleeping bunk on a first-paid, first-served basis. You should bring a small pillow and blanket or a sleeping bag for additional comfort. Stow your gear neatly and please do not clutter the floor with food coolers. Place your food coolers outside under the benches or on the top deck. Bring a small length of rope or bungee cords to secure your food coolers. Please do not bring aboard any large coolers for your fish (we provide iced storage for the catch.) Kindly leave all fish coolers in your car.

On boarding, you may place one rod in a holder at the rail. Stow all of your other rods in the rod holders on the upper deck.

See us on Facebook



The men's and women's heads are located outside, at the rear of the cabin. The heads are equipped with toilets, soap and fresh water. We suggest you bring along your toiletries plus a small towel for your personal hygiene needs.

SMOKING IS NOT ALLOWED IN THE CABIN OR HEADS!

Please be considerate of your fellow fishermen when stowing your gear, it will go a long way towards a comfortable trip for all.

CLOTHING

The days can be hot and the nights cold, so bring along enough clothing. We also suggest bringing along a rain suit in case of foul weather. Important - bring your waterproof shoes or boots! The deck will be wet if the weather is not dead calm and the mates regularly hose down the deck to keep it clean.

SEASICKNESS

The VOYAGER is large and stable, but if you have ever gotten seasick or even queasy while out fishing, we strongly suggest that you consider using one of the many types of seasick prevention medications available (but always consult your physician first). We don't want your trip to be unpleasant because of seasickness.

THE GALLEY

Our Galley is CLOSED during our regular offshore canyon tuna trips. You may bring small coolers aboard with your own meals, drinks and snacks. A microwave oven is available for you to heat your food.

Our Galley is OPEN for our extended 30-hour canyon tuna trips. A full menu of breakfast, lunch and dinner choices at reasonable prices is available. Check the Galley page on our web site for menu selections.

WE DON'T MIND IF YOU BRING A FEW BEERS OR SOME WINE, BUT WE WILL NOT ALLOW YOU TO BRING HARD LIQUOR OR TOLERATE THE EXCESSIVE CONSUMPTION OF ALCOHOL.

For your safety, consuming alcoholic beverages is NOT PERMITTED while we are under way to the fishing grounds nor during fishing hours. You may, however, drink alcoholic beverages during the return trip to the dock. This rule is in effect not only for your personal safety and the safety of others, but also ensures that the majority of fish hooked are boated and this results in a better time for all.

THE FISH

We will be fishing for tuna. We typically catch five tuna species: Yellowfin, Allison (really Yellowfin over 150 pounds), Longfin (also called Albacore), Bigeye and Bluefin. When you buy cans of tuna at the supermarket, the cans labeled 'Chunk Light' typically contain Yellowfin, and those labeled 'Solid White Albacore' contain Longfin. The most common tuna we catch is the Yellowfin followed by the Longfin, and the least common is the Bigeye. Occasionally, anglers also catch Mahi-Mahi (Dolphin fish), edible sharks (such as Mako), White Marlin and Swordfish. The tuna vary in size, but are generally in the following ranges:

Yellowfin	20 to 150 pounds
Allison	150 to 300 pounds
Big-Eye	80 to 350 pounds
Longfin	20 to 80 pounds
Bluefin	20 to 1,000 pounds

Needless to say, large tuna above 200 pounds will be very difficult, but not impossible, to get into the boat. Getting ANY tuna or large fish into the boat requires TEAMWORK, COOPERATION and PATIENCE on the part of every fisherman, the crew, and the guy tied to the fish.

Federal recreational angling regulations allow you to keep up to three (3) Yellowfin tuna per trip. Yellowfin tuna must be greater than 27 inches in length. Current federal regulations allow the VESSEL to keep ONE (1) Bluefin tuna greater than 27 inches but less than 47 inches in length, plus ONE (1) Bluefin tuna greater than 47 inches but less than 73 inches in length. Currently, Longfin tuna do not have size or possession limits and are not considered part of your quota.

THE BAIT

You will be using Butterfish for bait in a technique called 'chunking'. The baits are called Butterfish because they exude golden colored oil, which looks like butter. They are a native species in the offshore canyons along the New Jersey coast, and are part of the tuna's natural food supply. We may also provide frozen Sardines and sometimes, boxed Squid.

Often, you will also be able to catch live Squid, Anchovies, and Mackerel for bait since they are attracted to the boat's lights during the night. The boat has a live bait tank for holding fresh-caught bait. Many times, live and fresh-caught bait will work better than the frozen bait we provide, and we encourage you to fish for them. So bring along a light spinning outfit and some small hooks, Sabiki™ bait catcher rigs (six hook type) and squid jigs (Yozuri™ squid jigs work the best). The mates will fish for bait when fishing is slow, but once the action heats up; the mates will be working hard to help you land your fish and can't take the time to catch bait. It is very difficult for them to keep up with a boat full of anglers and an ocean full of hungry tuna. Because of this, we ask everyone to pitch in if you want to use live bait during the trip. If you don't fish for fresh-caught bait, don't expect the mates to give them to you.

THE TECHNIQUE – CHUNKING

When we get to the Canyons, locate fish and get the anchor set, the mates will start to toss cut up pieces of Butterfish and other baitfish into the water starting a chum slick. This attracts the tuna to the boat. You will use a whole butterfish as bait, hiding the hook in the Butterfish so that the tuna cannot see the hook, and presenting the Butterfish in as natural a way as possible.

To bait your hook, open the Butterfish or Sardine's mouth. Put the barb of the hook through the mouth and out through the gill, taking care not to hook the fish in the process. Then take the barb of the hook, insert it at the rear of the gill opening with the point towards the belly of the fish, and push it into the fish while rotating the shank of the hook parallel to the fish's spine. Done correctly, the hook will disappear into the Butterfish and not be visible. The eye of the hook will be just inside the Butterfish's mouth. If you can't see the hook, neither can the tuna. If you have never done this before, or just want to see it done, the mates will hold a brief seminar after we leave the dock.

If you choose to use live or dead Squid bait, you need to hook them differently than you hook a Butterfish or Sardine. Put your hook through the tail end of the squid (opposite the end with the tentacles) so that the hook comes out of the other side. It is that simple. When using squid baits, you usually use a lead weight to help get the squid down 80 to 150 feet.

The captain will announce how deep to lower your baits. To lower your bait properly, you must strip line from the reel in short, measured lengths. If you are using a rig with a sinker, do not just drop the rig in a free-fall or the bait will wrap around your line and you will never get a fish to take it. While holding the rod in your right hand, put your right thumb on the spool and put your reel in freespool, then grab the line as it comes off the reel with your left hand, and pull the line toward the tip of the rod. For the average person this will strip off about 2 feet of line. Let the bait and rig fall and repeat the process until you get to the depth that the captain has suggested. Once you have lowered your bait, wait a few minutes, and if you don't get a bite, reel up and start over again. Change your bait frequently. The scent will get washed out after about ten minutes in the water.

If the current is taking your line at an angle to the rod tip, then your bait is also being pushed upward and you will need to make an adjustment in order to maintain the proper depth. The general rule of thumb is a 30° angle means you need to let out 10% more line to be at the right depth. If the current gets too strong, you must add one or more lead egg sinkers to help compensate for this effect.

If there is little or no current, we suggest fishing without using lead weights. This technique is more difficult than with weights, but it can be more productive if done properly. When fishing without weights, your bait will sink differently than with a weighted line and you must make sure your line does not foul a fellow angler's line. Again, you want to let your line out by pulling off measured amounts of line with your reel in freespool. You must try to allow your bait to sink without resistance so it looks as harmless as the chunks of chum that are descending. Sometimes, a small amount of slack in the line helps. Once you get your bait 150-200 feet away from the boat, it will be out of the chum/chunk line, and you must reel up and start again (use a fresh bait.) Again, change your bait frequently. The scent will get washed out after about ten minutes in the water. We have consistently seen this technique out-fish a weighted rig, but it requires your full attention.

As tuna enter the boat's chum slick, they will consume the small pieces of chum and then look for the whole Butterfish. When a hungry tuna takes your bait, it will be very obvious to you, since they take the bait at almost full swimming speed, (30 to 50 miles per hour.) If you are using a standard hook, point the rod tip at the fish, give the fish a slow '5 count', engage the drag on your reel, and then REEL until the line gets tight. For those using circle hooks, wait until the line goes tight, then gently but firmly raise your rod to the '2 o'clock' position. In either case, the fish should be hooked. When you have hooked a fish, yell 'FISH ON!' This will alert one of the crew who will then come over to assist you. Finally - HOLD ON! Tuna can swim at up to 60 miles per hour over short distances and are very powerful.

THE TECHNIQUE – TROLLING

Sometimes during daylight hours, we find trolling an effective method of catching fish. Please note that trolling is purely circumstantial. It depends on the situation and is not done on every trip. We supply the lures for trolling, but if you lose one with a fish on, you must pay for it (about \$25.) You may bring your own lures if you have them. We will attach the lures on the same rods you are using for chunking. When we troll, we split the group into two or three trolling teams. We will switch trolling teams every 20 to 30 minutes so each team has a fair chance to catch fish.

The mates will help and instruct you in placing your lure the proper distance from the boat. If your trolling rod gets a hit, the crew will yell 'FISH ON!' Do NOT grab your rod! The boat will continue to troll for up to 15 more seconds to try and get more fish hooked up. When the boat is finally taken out of gear, grab your rod with both hands and smoothly lift it out of the rod holder and into your harness. If you do not have a fish on, you must quickly reel in your lure and get out of the way.

THE TECHNIQUE – JIGGING

For the team not trolling, we suggest you get yourself ready to jig for tuna. Bring a rod with a 3/0 or 4/0 conventional reel (or equivalent) and rig it with an 8 to 12-ounce diamond jig. When fish are hooked while trolling, the boat will be turned broadside to the wind and taken out of gear. As the boat comes to a stop and the other fish are being fought, cast or flip your jig off the upwind side of the boat (the wind will be in your face) and jig for tuna. The captain will announce the depth to jig at.

Jigging can be done two ways. You may either let the jig down to the desired depth and raise and lower your rod tip in long, sharp sweeps, or let the jig down to the depth the captain has suggested and then reel in the jig as fast as you can. It is not uncommon to hook as many jig fish as troll fish. Jigging can also be effective from an anchored boat while chunking and we encourage you to try it. In fact, jigging is sometimes the most productive way to catch tuna. We frequently see jig fishermen out-fish everyone else. Jigging can be done both day and night. However, sunrise is frequently the best time. If you want to jig, we ask that you reel up your chunk bait rod and stow it. Take your jig rod to the least crowded area of the boat (usually the bow or the side opposite the side where the lines are going out) and pitch the jig away from the boat and use one of the above techniques.

HOW TO GET TUNA INTO THE BOAT

PLEASE PAY CAREFUL ATTENTION TO THIS SECTION. OUR SUGGESTIONS HAVE NOW BECOME RULES!

PAY ATTENTION TO THE MATES! They have done this more times than you, know more about what to do and how to do it than you. They are trying to help all of YOU to get fish in the boat.

IF A MATE ASKS YOU TO MOVE OUT OF THE WAY, then move as fast as you can!

IF A MATE HAS TO CUT YOUR LINE to get you out of a tangle, he will re-rig you as soon as possible.

FOLLOW YOUR FISH! You must move around the boat with your fish. Keep a 90° angle to the boat with your rod. This means that the line should be going straight out into the water. The old saying of 'no angle, no tangle' is true. If you keep the line straight out in front of you, 90° to the rail, you will not tangle as often. Tangles will occur, but we want to reduce them as much as possible. Hooked tuna swim in a giant circle, pulling up to 200 yards of line behind them and the fishing line will have a 'belly' in it from the friction of the water. Think of it as an upside down ice cream cone. As the tuna swims in this circle, it tends to collect other lines. And as the fish tires, it starts to swim in smaller circles. To reduce tangles, as the circles decrease you must increase your lifting pressure on the fish to keep it coming straight up.

IF SOMEONE IS HOOKED UP AND COMING PAST YOU, GET OUT OF THE WAY! It is not easy to hang onto a tuna and walk at the same time, even when no one is in the way. After you have experienced this just one time, you will become a true believer in cooperation. Typically, the man with the fish will need to go over you and your rod. Make this easy for him by pointing your rod at the water and ducking or moving where you are told. If you don't move, expect others to move you! When you get to the bow of the boat with a fish that goes under the anchor line and under the anchor pulpit, the mates will take the rod from you, pass it under the pulpit and return the rod to you. If you are wearing a harness you will need to unclip quickly, back off the drag just a bit and hand your rod to the mates.

IF YOU ARE IN A TANGLE WITH A PERSON THAT HAS A FISH ON, DO NOT PUT ANY PRESSURE ON YOUR LINE! Immediately put your reel into freespool, and let the person finish catching his fish, or cut your line. You will likely find that cutting your line is the best option since you could be in the tangle for a half-hour or more.

NEVER LEAVE YOUR ROD UNATTENDED AT THE RAIL! If you have to use the head, or go into the cabin for a snack, REEL UP YOUR LINE AND STOW AWAY YOUR ROD. If someone is coming around the boat with a fish on, he will not be able to lift his rod over your rod and continue around the boat. The mates will cut the line of any unattended rod and place it under a bench or somewhere else where it is out of the way.

WHEN YOUR FISH IS FINALLY GAFFED AND IN THE BOAT, CUT YOUR LINE OFF AT THE HOOK AND GIVE THE MATE A TAG. The mate will take your fish to the fish collaring area, remove the head and guts, attach the tag, and then place it in the ice hold. You may be asked to help drag your fish to a specific area during a mad-dog bite.

These are simple rules and they MUST be followed to ensure everyone's success!

TACKLE

We recommend a 6/0 or equivalent single or two-speed conventional reel and matching stand-up rod. Your reel should be filled with new 80-pound test monofilament. A rod belt and harness are very helpful, especially with larger fish. 6/0 or 8/0 hooks or equivalently sized circle hooks are the best for this style of fishing. Note that circle hooks have a different size numbering system, so look at the hook before you buy.

If you are interested in jigging for tuna, then also bring along a 3/0 or 4/0 conventional reel and matching rod. Fill the reel with either 50 or 60-pound test line. We recommend using 8 to 12-ounce chrome plated diamond jigs fitted with a single 7/0 or 9/0 Siwash hook.

The boat will provide 6/0 or 8/0 Eagle Claw™ hooks and/or Mustad™ circle hooks. We will also provide monofilament leader material and swivels. While we will provide pre-tied rigs, we will also show you how to tie a rig during the seminar that we give during the way out and we suggest you take the time to make a few rigs before we start fishing. We do NOT provide sinkers, fluorocarbon leaders, jigs or any other special tackle, so if you like to use these items you should bring your own. If you can't get these items locally, or if you forget to bring them, don't panic, they are all available before the trip at the nearby Fishermen's Supply Tackle Shop.

Rods and reels are NOT included in your fare, and we strongly recommend that you bring your own if you have them. We do have rental rods and two-speed reels available for \$25 per setup. However, we do not provide rod belts or harnesses. If you need a rental setup, please let us know when you make your reservation. Also note that we only have chunking/trolling rods and cannot provide jigging or bait-catching rods. If you lose a rental rod overboard, we unfortunately must charge you a \$350 replacement fee.

Tuna are large and very strong fish and will test your tackle to its limits. If you have the slightest flaw in your tackle it will likely break. The weakest parts of your tackle setup are typically your line knots. There are several knots that can be reliably used for tuna fishing, but they must be tied properly in order to withstand the strain. We recommend using the Palomar, Trilene, and Improved Clinch knots. If you don't know how to make these knots, ask the mates and they will show you how to tie them.

Setting your drag correctly is very important. You are fishing from a boat that is at anchor in 450 to 700 feet of water on the edge of a submarine canyon that is 5,000 feet deep. The boat can't move to chase a hooked fish like a sportfishing charter, so your reel's drag becomes an important tool for fighting a tuna from a stationary platform. We recommend you set your drag tension to 25% of the rated line strength (for lever-drag reels such as Penn Internationals or Shimano TLDs, set them for 25% at the Strike position). For example, if you are using 80-pound test line, set your drag to 20 pounds of tension. It is important that you recheck your drag several times during the trip to make sure it hasn't changed. A scale is commonly used to measure drag tension and we will show you how

to set your drag during the seminar.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER YOU CATCH A TUNA

Our mates have gaffed and hoisted your fish over the rail and onto the deck. Your fish is finally in the boat! We ask you to cut your line off as near to the hook as possible, give the mate a tag for the fish and possibly help get the fish out of the way.

Cut the entire leader off. Cut it at the hook eye and leave the hook buried in the tuna's mouth. Completely re-rig for the next fish since the leader will likely be chafed and the hook stressed.

The mate will take your fish, attach your tag, and then carefully head and gut it. He will cut a small incision around the anus to release the colon, cut down behind the head through the spine, and then remove the head, gills and intestines with a deft pull. Amazing! He will then pack the fish in our ice hold, where it will stay until you get back to the dock.

THE MATES, LOINING OF YOUR TUNA, AND TIPPING GUIDELINES

The mates are working for you the whole time you are on the boat. They coach, help, re-rig, chum, gaff fish, untangle your line, take photos and clean your fish. They learned what they know by doing it over and over again until their techniques are perfected. The mates are a big part of getting your fish into the boat. They know what they are doing, so listen to them and it will make your trip easier and better.

Optionally, the mates will also loin out your tuna for you, cut the loins into steaks, put them in plastic bags and help you pack your cooler. This extra work is done on a fee basis, not for 'handshakes and smiles'. After you see it done, you will understand how much work is involved in preparing your fish for the table, and how much you don't know about how to do it. The fee for making your catch table-ready is \$20 per tuna.

Tipping guidelines are the same as for dinner in a good restaurant. If you are pleased with the service, then 15% of the fare you paid is an appropriate tip. Keep in mind that the mates are there to serve you far longer than the 1 or 2 hours a waiter or waitress provides during dinner. The mates work primarily for your tips and will knock themselves out to try and help you. They work hard even if we don't catch many fish. Please acknowledge their great efforts.