



# BAHAMAS BONEFISH



## TACKLE & EQUIPMENT GUIDE

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## Bonefish Tackle & Equipment

The primary focus of fishing the Bahamas is sight fishing for bonefish. On the average, bonefish will be in the 3 - 5 pound range. Smaller bonefish tend to swim together in large schools, a natural defense against sharks, barracudas and other predators. Large bonefish generally travel alone or in pairs. We have found that most times when fishing to big schools of moving bonefish, the largest fish tend to be in the back of the pack. Bonefish are active feeders and a variety of flies and fishing strategies are effective in taking them.

### Fly Rods:

We strongly suggest 9', 4 piece travel rods in 7, 8 and 9 weights. Fast action rods that generate high line speed are the most popular, and rods that have been especially designed for the rigors of saltwater fly-fishing are the best choice. In that category, we like the Sage, Scott, and Winston rods. Traveling with a spare rod is always good idea.

### Fly Reels:

Reels designed for saltwater fly fishing are important. Features to look for are smooth drags, sufficient backing capacity, and a machined, anodized aluminum, one-piece frame. Large arbor reels are a great choice, quickly retrieving line and backing. Proven saltwater reels are manufactured by Abel, Ross, Hatch, and Galvan.

### Fly Lines:

A weight forward floating line designed for the tropics is extremely important. Scientific Anglers Bonefish and Redfish Warm are excellent lines, as well as the Rio Flats Pro series. These lines are specifically designed for saltwater fly fishing and have a specifically designed core that provides the proper stiffness to allow excellent shooting while resisting tangles, even in tropical heat. They are extremely accurate lines, and the running portion is a large diameter and floats on top of the water, making it a pleasure for wade fishing. Traveling with a back-up fly line is strongly suggested. It weighs almost nothing, takes up little space in your luggage, and won't spoil before your next trip.

### Flats Boots & Socks:

There are daily opportunities to get out of the boat and wade the flats. If you prefer wading, your guide can have you on foot most of the day. This means that you'll need a pair of quality flats boot for both foot protection and comfort. Quality boots that fit well are important, and proven models are made by Simms. Simms lightweight neoprene socks will add an additional layer of protection, absorbing the friction from sand that gets inside your boots.

### Leaders & Tippet:

We typically fish 9' - 12' tapered saltwater leaders made from clear monofilament or fluorocarbon, with 12 - 20 lb. test the most popular choices. 12lb. leaders are common, but there are situations where you want to go heavier, 16lb. or 20lb, making the release quick and easy.

Both nylon and fluorocarbon leaders are popular among bonefish aficionados, with each having their specific properties. Nylon sinks slower than fluorocarbon and could be a good choice for presenting to fish in extremely shallow water. Fluorocarbon is less visible and more abrasion resistant, possibly the best as your last few feet of tippet.

### Bonefish Flies:

Experienced anglers typically agree that having the right fly can make the difference between a good trip and a great one. Having a broad selection of bonefish flies will help to ensure that you have a successful trip. An important aspect of fly selection is sink rate. When tying or purchasing bonefish flies, vary the sink rate of your flies by including some with no eyes, bead chain eyes, and lead barbell eyes. This allows you to fish different depths of water and to fish tailing fish and cruising fish.



As a general rule, use light colored flies on a sand bottom, and dark colored flies on turtle grass or rubble bottoms. On the flats, high visibility can turn any creature into prey. Most prey on bonefish flats are well camouflaged. Try smaller flies for fish that are spooky or tailing on shallow flats in calm weather conditions. On deeper flats, or in windy conditions, larger flies work well, especially on fish that are cruising fast. Larger flies should typically be cast further away from bonefish.

Subtle earth tone flies often work best on sunny, bright days in shallow water when bonefish are spooky. Bright flies generally work best on cloudy or overcast days.

Year after year the Gotcha has proven to be a go to fly, spawning a number of effective variations including the Beck's Sili Legs. Spawning and Mantis shrimp patterns are important flies on South Andros, and it seems like every guide and angler has their favorite patterns.

Bring your favorite Gotchas, spawning shrimp and crab patterns, in white, pink, pearl, brown, and tan in sizes 2, 4 and 6. Include weighted flies for fishing the deeper edges and high tides, and unweighted flies for fish in skinny water. You may need to change the pearl Gotcha that worked all morning to a Spawning Mantis in the afternoon.

With these thoughts in mind, we have prepared a list of flies with which we have found success.

#### **Bonefish Flies:**

- Gotcha - #2, 4 & 6
- Orange Butt Gotcha - #4, 6
- Shallow Water Clouser - #6, tan/white, & chartreuse/white
- Mini Puff - #4 & 6, pink & tan
- E.P. Spawning Shrimp - #4, Bead chain and lead eyes, tan and translucent
- Borski's Bonefish Slider - #2, 4
- Squimp - #2, 6
- Miheves Flats Fly - #6
- Beck's Silli-Legs - #6, tan
- Bonefish Junk - #2, 4, 6
- Spawning Mantis - # 2, 4, 6
- Sandy's Cracked Crab - #4
- Raghead Crab - #6, tan