

# BEST PRACTICES FOR GROUP FISHING TRIPS

## 1. CONSIDERATIONS

When crewing on a club member's boat, the boat captain/owner will expect costs to be shared amongst all crew members. The expense sharing considerations on the following pages are typical practices used by club captains. Each captain reserves the right to operate as they feel is the most practical. Regardless of how the expense sharing is implemented on each vessel, the following should be taken into consideration by the crew:

### A. The boat captain (owner):

- i. Has made a huge investment in the boat and has likely made significant sacrifices in his/her lifestyle in order to do so.
- ii. Spends a lot of time/energy/money on boat maintenance. Yearly scheduled maintenance can cost upwards of \$1000/year, not to mention unanticipated repairs. A typical owner will spend many hours cleaning, adjusting, and inspecting - before and after each trip. It is very rare to return from a fishing trip without needing at least minor repairs.
- iii. Spends a full day of prep and clean up for a boat on each side of a trip, so a crew doing a good job with clean up helps shorten this effort and is greatly appreciated.
- iv. Typically spends a lot of time and money upgrading the boat and procuring tackle/gear to make your fishing trip more successful or pleasurable.
- v. Often provides most/all of the rods/reels and tackle. He/she spent a lot of money (maybe an enormous amount) on this equipment that makes your fishing trip better. The average captain also supplies a wide variety of tools and safety equipment for the crew.
- vi. Often spends most of his/her time handling the boat and not fishing; in rough conditions, he/she may not fish at all.

## 2. METHODS AND EXAMPLES

### A. Hauling the Boat to the event

- i. Split Method - Fuel cost for the tow vehicle is generally split evenly by each individual fishing/riding on the boat regardless of whether or not they rode in the tow vehicle and is not pro-rated by how many days an individual fished/rode in the boat. Sometimes the captain makes an allowance for personal transportation costs.

### B. Lodging

- i. Split Method - Generally split the lodging cost per occupant or bed or bedroom per night. Various factors can come into play. If all occupants are anglers, the lodging cost may be split evenly, regardless of beds required. If one angler is left without a bed, he/she might (or might not) receive a discount/consideration.
- ii. Examples
  1. *Captain + 3 crew have a condo with 4 beds at \$100/night = \$25/night each*
  2. *Captain + Spouse + 1 crew + spouse + 2 crew have a condo with 4 beds. Captain + Spouse = \$25, 1 Crew + Spouse = \$25, 2 Crew = \$25 ea.*
  3. *Crew member in above scenario comes for only 3 of 4 days - Manage expectations beforehand. If the size of the room was an upgrade based on needing the extra space, then the captain may want to charge equally for all nights, regardless if it was utilized by the crew since it was available and required for that crew. If it were a last-minute invitation to the crew, the cost would most likely be borne only for the nights utilized, i.e. split the expenses 3 ways on day 1, then 4 ways on day 2-4.*

### C. Estimating Boat Fuel and Oil

- i. Split Method and Tips for Tracking Fuel Usage
  1. *On later model boats, there is usually a meter which can be easily utilized to track fuel usage. Since the cost per gallon will likely vary at each fuel station, an average price can be obtained by dividing the total fuel expense by the total number of gallons purchased.*
  2. *2. If there is no fuel usage meter on the boat, make the process easier by filling the fuel tank(s) before the first day of fishing and note the amount of fuel required (alternately, start with the fuel tank at a level that can be repeated if possible, i.e. 1/2- or 3/4-full). Keep track of all fuel expenses during the trip. At some point shortly after the last day's fishing, exact fuel usage can be determined by filling the tank again (or filling to the alternate starting level); however, this is often not practical, in which case an estimate of remaining fuel needs to be made.*
  3. *In most cases, fuel expenses are generally split evenly on a daily basis (amongst the crew fishing or riding on the boat on that day).*

ii. Example

1. *(based on captain + 3 crew): 50 gallons of fuel are added to fill up the 100-gal tank before the first fishing day, at a cost of \$150 (\$3.00/gallon). Throughout the trip, an additional 75 gallons are added at a cost of \$262.50 (\$3.50/gal). At the end of the trip, the fuel gauge shows approximately 1/4 full. So, an estimate can be made that 150 gals were used during the trip (all 125 gals purchased, plus 25 of the 50 gals in the tank prior to the trip). The average cost of fuel purchased was \$3.30/gal ( $\$412.50 \div 125 \text{ gal}$ ), which comes to a total fuel consumption of \$123.75/person (37.5 gals per person X \$3.30/gal).*

D. Bait and Ice for the boat and coolers

- i. Split Method - Cost of bait and ice used each day should generally be split evenly amongst the crew on the boat that day.

E. Tournament Entry Fee

- i. Split Method - Each crew member is responsible for their individual portion of the tournament fee. They may reimburse the captain or the club directly depending on the captain's specified arrangements and club rules.

F. Food in the condo/cabin

- i. Split Methods - The general rule is to split it equally amongst those eating the meals, but there are different methods which may be used, including
  1. *The captain or one of the crew may organize what everyone should bring so that the cost is fairly distributed*
  2. *Food may be purchased in bulk prior to or after arrival and split equally amongst those eating it.*
  3. *There may be nothing organized, and everyone is on their own*

G. Food and soft drinks/water for the boat

- i. Split Methods - The captain will generally coordinate with crew what the expectations are.
  1. *Food - everyone should generally bring their own food for the boat. Think of bringing food that can be eaten with one hand, i.e. wraps, sandwiches, trail mix, chips or pretzels.*
  2. *Drinks - everyone should be prepared to bring their own drinks unless prior arrangements are made. For small boats, a separate individual beverage thermos type cooler takes much less space and may be more appropriate than a cooler full of water and Gatorade bottles.*
  3. *If items such as Ice/Water/Gatorade are used equally by the crew, the cost would generally be split equally by those on the boat.*
  4. *The captain usually provides cooler(s) for food/soft drinks but check ahead to be sure.*

## H. Fishing Tackle and Gear

### i. Split Methods

- 1. The crew should be mindful of the hooks/leaders/weights lost and be prepared to compensate the supplier with replacement gear or payment.*
- 2. Trolling gear lost during fishing may or may not require reimbursement from the crew; clarify this with the captain prior to fishing.*
- 3. If the crew is using rigged ballyhoo or any other disposable type of gear, they are generally treated as part of the shared bait expense.*
- 4. If someone drops something overboard, they should reimburse the owner or replace the equipment.*
- 5. If equipment is broken as part of normal wear and tear or typically expected risks, i.e. a reel seizes up, or a big fish breaks a small rod, no reimbursement is typically required. If a crew member is at fault for damage to gear, the owner should be reimbursed.*

## 3. FAQ

A. Q: I'm bringing my son/daughter/spouse to fish with me on a trip. What expenses should they be attributed?

A: The related angler should expect to pay an equal share of all expenses for anyone fishing. Exceptions are sometimes made for young children. Exceptions to lodging expense may also be made if the extra angler sleeps on the floor or otherwise does not equally utilize the lodging space.

B. Q: I'm bringing my son/daughter/spouse with me on a trip, but they are not fishing. What expenses should they be attributed?

A: The extra guest should have an equal share of all expenses except for those related to the boat and fishing (see above for possible exceptions to lodging expenses). A non-fishing guest will not owe angler tournament fees but may need to pay for any club-provided meals (i.e. the Awards Dinner).

They should not owe any boat/fishing expenses unless they participated in any boating trips; if they participate in non-fishing boating trips, they should have an equal share of all boat-related expenses. If they ride along during tournament fishing trips, you should clarify in advance with the captain exactly what portion of the expense will be allocated, if any.

C. Q: I don't have any saltwater gear, but my friend invited me to fish with him. What should I do?

A: Ask the captain before bringing anything with you. The captain may ask you to bring specific gear. Space is limited on boats, so do not bring unnecessary items. If the captain or another crew member provides your fishing gear/tackle, be mindful of what you are using, and be prepared reimburse the owner for what you've used.

D. Q: What if I'm at a tournament/trip and paid my entry fee or planned to be on boat A, and for some reason I fish or cruise on boat B for a day or two during the tournament/trip?

A: This all depends on the conditions creating the change. If the switch was not suggested or endorsed by the original boat/captain, you should be prepared to fulfill your original obligations to Boat A, in addition to sharing expenses on Boat B. If the change was a mutually-agreed-upon situation, then the boat/fishing costs for each day would typically be split evenly amongst the crew actually fishing on each boat.

E. Q: I was invited on a trip where the captain can take 4 people in the tow vehicle, but I'm the 5th person. Should I be expected to pay a share of the haul fuel plus fuel etc. for my own vehicle?

A: Yes. However, if there was no room in the tow vehicle or if the captain requested you bring your vehicle to help with logistics, an allowance may be made for the fuel/vehicle you provide. If you are taking your own vehicle simply for your own convenience, then you should expect to pay all of your own vehicle expenses, as well as share expenses for the tow vehicle. You should always clarify the expense allocation in advance.

F. Q: I was invited on a trip where the captain is leaving the day before the tournament, but I can't get off work until later so I'm meeting him at the tournament. Should I be expected to pay a share of the haul fuel plus fuel etc. for my own vehicle?

A: Yes. The best practice is that the captain would offer seats in the tow vehicle if room allows. If you can't make it, you are generally responsible for your own transportation and a share of the towing expense. If possible, try to coordinate a rideshare with other club members.

G. Q: Who is responsible for tracking and estimating expenses?

A: The captain should be responsible for tracking and estimating expenses, it is up to the crew members to report to the captain re any group expenses or payments they make during the trip.

H. Q: As a crew member, how do I know what I should pay?

A: Generally, the captain and crew split the expenses equally, such as accommodations, and haul expenses. Crew may be asked to pay for expenses during the trip such as fuel/bait/ice, so bring funds (cash is best). Make sure to keep all receipts or write down the cost of any group expenses you paid for as a crew member and let the captain know. The captain will generally log it and credit it to your account for the trip. Once the last expense item is known to the captain, the captain will generally send an itemized expense ledger to all the crew for reimbursement. Conversely, the captain may ask for reimbursement off of an estimate based on past trips and knowledge. If you have questions, ask.

I. Q: As a captain, how should I keep track of my expenses?

A: There are a few recommended methods:

1. Keep a spreadsheet either on paper or electronically and log all group expenses, as well as each person's payments.
2. Use a smartphone app like Splitwise to track and divide all expenses. This is very simple and used by many club members. It provides a detailed ledger at the end of the trip.
3. If, as a captain, you have completed a similar trip multiple times and you have a good estimate of expenses, let your crew know ahead of time what you think their fair share should be.

J. Q: As a crew member, how should I settle with my crew/captain?

A: Once the captain sends out a ledger of expenses or provides an estimate, the preferred method is to use an agreed upon app such as Venmo to reimburse the captain within 72 hours. Some captains may prefer checks; in any case, pay your share of expense promptly.

K. Q: Whose rods and reels should we use, and what terminal tackle should I bring?

A: This often depends on the size and configuration of the boat. For boats of equal length, a center console will have less storage room than a cuddy. The captain should coordinate with the crew regarding rods and reels. It is the captain's decision if he wants to use the "boat" gear or if he wants the crew to bring their own gear. The captain should consider the boat's available rod storage and what is necessary and practical to bring for each day. The captain may have plenty of tackle and the appropriate places to store it on the boat. Bringing too much tackle can hinder team performance and add to clutter. As an example, the captain may be glad to have the crew bring their own leaders and drop weights but have everyone use the captain's terminal trolling tackle. This is an individual boat choice that should be considered before crew members show up with their 30lb tackle box or

boxes. As a crew member, don't assume that you should bring all of your rods. Check with the captain and make a team decision before each trip.

L. Q: How much personal gear should I bring on the boat - food, clothes, etc.?

A: This depends on the size and configuration of the boat, as well as the number of anglers, the type of fishing, and the duration of the trip. As a crew member, try to limit yourself to 1 small dry bag, in addition to any tackle items the captain suggests you bring. The captain will generally have a cooler for any food, and for drinks be prepared to bring a thermos or utilize a shared cooler depending on the captain's choice. It is a good idea to also have a pair of pliers, and a knife that is worn on your person, but that may not be necessary if the captain provides those. Obviously, there are items you should always bring, including rain gear, sunglasses, cap/hat, personal medications, sunscreen, phone, etc. Always come prepared for bad weather or rough seas.

M. Q: I'm riding in the tow vehicle with the captain, how much stuff should I bring?

A: Check with the captain; space is almost always limited. You may want to just bring one or two coolers for fish for the entire crew and leave a cooler in your car to take your fish back to the house upon return. Rods are also frequently space constrained so break them down if possible and check with the captain.

N. Q: We all caught different fish, how do we split them between the crew?

A: The general practice is to split the daily catch equally amongst the entire crew that were fishing that day, but this can vary.

O. Q: How do most folks deal with adult beverages on the boat and at the camp/condo?

A: Ask your Captain about the policy on the boat. Fishing in open water is much more physically demanding than fishing on your local lake or inshore. Safety is the primary concern. Captains may or may not allow alcohol on the boat while fishing. If they do, they may only allow consumption on the ride home after the gear has been stowed. If there is no group plan for purchasing alcohol for consumption back at the condo/camp, most members will bring their own for consumption ashore. It's important to remember that most tournaments require an early rise and shine time in the morning, so moderation is important. It is not fair to others on the crew if a crew member is hungover and cannot contribute an equal share.