



The ultimate in 'hosted' angling adventures throughout the Amazon.

UK Agent and Promotional Management for Amazon-Angler.com

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## TAKING IN ONE OF OUR AMAZON ANGLING ADVENTURES? LET'S TALK TACKLE – CATFISH & ARAPAIMA

Without doubt, most anglers will have large Catfish or Arapaima on their radar whilst in the Amazon. The Catfish get big and unlike those that can be caught in contained fisheries spend their days battling the strong river currents, a result of which is their immense strength and stamina. On whole or cut-bait, big Catfish like the Piraiba can be taken to way excess of 250lb and will strip line from your spool in a heartbeat. The Arapaima also behave differently than those within captive fisheries, with extensive lagoons as their habitat, they too have developed incredible strength, and will test both the angler and their tackle to the limit. It is therefore imperative that you have the best and most appropriate tackle when targeting these incredible fish. The information contained within this publication will provide a guideline to the kind of primary and terminal tackle suited to this angling environment and is based on prior experience and 'what works well'. It should be noted that this is not an endorsement to any specific manufacturer / product and final selection as always will be down to the individual (See p5 for the specifics for Arapaima).

### RODS

Rods are such a personal item, and whilst we advocate the use of multi-section travel rods for ease of travel, many anglers will have that 'old trusted' rod which has performed over and over, and which they want to bring – and that's OK. In general, the Catfishing and Arapaima fishing will be from the boats and having a relatively short rod pays dividends when at close quarters with the fish. However, longer rods provide a little more casting ability, which can sometimes be important. We have used a number of rods, of different sections over the years, from 2-piece 10' rods such as the **Pic 1. 5lb TC Free Spirit Cat-Tamer 'S'** to multi-section (4 or 5) rods such as the **Pic 2. OKUMA 'Nomad' 20-60lb 7' 0"** the **Pic 3. PENN 'Rampage' 30-50lb 7' 4"** and the **Pic 4. PENN 'Regiment' 30-50lb 7' 4"**. Although travel rods are much easier to transport, many anglers see multiple spigots as unwelcomed points of potential failure, especially with the large fish.

For those who want to try lure fishing for the Arapaima, we recommend short heavy action rods. In the UK, these are quite rare, especially in multi section, however the **Pic 5. FOX Prism Range** does provide a 4-piece 100g Heavy Spin rod at 7' 10", which I would be happy to use.

For the fly fishers out there, go for 10-14wt rods, again in the UK these may be difficult to source in multi section, so bringing 2-piece may be the only solution.



Most travel rods come with their own protective case, but they take up volume, so if your travel luggage is sturdy i.e., has a hard bottom, consider packing your rods safely in your checked in baggage. If you are bringing longer rods, ensure they are protected well **Pic 6. Bazuka Hard Tubes** are a popular choice. Depending on your carrier these may result in a surcharge as 'excess' or 'oversize' baggage, so be prepared for additional costs.



**TRAVEL ADVICE:** For more information on luggage, look at the 'Top Travel Tips' publication which can be found on our website at [www.amazon-adventure.co.uk](http://www.amazon-adventure.co.uk).



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## REELS

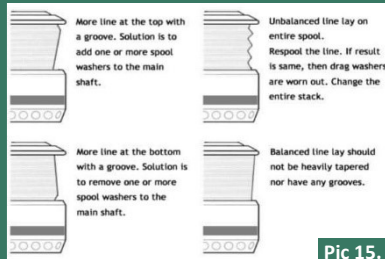
For 'fixed spool' reels, go for 12000 series bait-runners such as **Pic 7. Shimano Thunnus** , **Pic 8. Shimano Oceanic** or **Pic 9. Shimano Baitrunner D**. Select one with a strong clutch and a smooth drag. You will need to ensure it can accommodate a line capacity of at least 250yds of 100lb braided mainline. Those preferring multipliers, reels such as the **Pic 10. PENN Warfare 20LW** are ideal, but again ensure the same line capacity and clutch / drag performance as the fixed spool reels. If looking to use a lure rod with trigger grip, think about one of the larger **Shimano Tran X** reels, these are super tough and have incredible cranking power. For fly fishing, consider one of the saltwater models. As with rods, reel choice is down to the individual, but ensure they are of good quality and more importantly, is in good condition for your trip (*See p6 for more info on reel selection*).



**REMINDER:** When spooling up with braid, make sure you have either a mono backing or the braid is fully secured to the spool core. We have seen loose 'spool stacks' on many occasions which is problematic to fix out on the boats.

## MAINLINE

Most anglers will have their personal preference based on past use / experience, but the brands below **Pics 11 to 14** are a few that we have used successfully over the years – **Spectra Power Pro**, **Spectra Maxcuatro**, **Berkley Whiplash & Spider Wire**. In general, 'moss green' works well, although we have seen yellow, red and many other colours some of which have attracted unwanted attention from Piranhas!! For this angling environment, braid needs to be rated at 100lb (minimum), and make sure you spool up with new braid before your trip (*See p6 for more info on braided mainline*).



Most spinning reels are designed for use with braid and mono/fluoro. This inevitably means compromise, as mono/fluoro is thicker than braid and quite often the line lay on the spool is not optimal for either, resulting in the potential for 'wind knots'. To get around this problem most new reels come with a package of spool washers to allow the angler to fine tune the line lay for the best balance. Check out the handy reference in **Pic 15**. To work out whether you need to make any adjustments.



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## LEADERS



Pic 16.



Pic 17.

Several of the Catfish species, especially 'Jau' will try leading you into structure. In general, braided mainline is susceptible to damage through abrasion so you will need to splice a 10' – 15' leader onto your braided mainline to minimise the risk of line break. There continues to be debate on what provides the best in abrasion resistance, **Pic 16. Monofilament** or **Pic 17. fluorocarbon**. We tend to use monofilament rated at 100lb although Berkley 'Trilene' ticks either box. As always, final selection of leader material will be down to individual preference.

## KNOTS

Along with the 'usual suspects' there are a couple of knots that you really need to be proficient at: the 'Haywire Twist' and the 'FG'.



Pic 18.

The **Pic 18. Haywire Twist** is a fabulous and almost bulletproof method when using single strand wire (see section on hook links) and is the 'go to' knot for that wire link between the swivel and the hook. We are not going to try and explain this in narrative, so would suggest you do a quick google search which will take you to a wealth of [YouTube](#) tutorials, providing help and assistance with this.



Pic 19.

The **Pic 19. FG Knot** is one of our favourites, and here's the reason why. Like some Catfishing techniques we do not use a captive lead, mainly due to fish welfare in the event of a break in the braided mainline/leader. So, a running lead is the best way of keeping the bait on the bottom whilst allowing good bite registration and the classic 'run'. With a running lead it is vital that the 'run ring' can easily pass over any knot between the braided mainline and the leader and the 'FG' is an ultra slimline knot widely used within the big game fishing side of the sport. Again, we are not going to get too *deep into the weeds* with this knot, as [YouTube](#) will provide all the tutorials that you need. It's not always easy, so practice will make perfect.

## LEADS / SINKERS



Pic 20.

In the UK, we have a vast range of **Pic 20. Leads** available to us from the Carp / Catfish & Sea Fishing worlds. A lot of the waters in the Amazon are fast flowing, that's where the Catfish will be, so it's important to get your bait down as quickly as possible and then keep it there. We tend to favour leads around 4oz–5oz and flat grippers are ideal. There is an argument that 'pear shaped' leads are easier to get out if stuck in rocks, but 'grippers' have always worked well. Additionally, most of the river bottoms are either rock or sand, so picking coloured / textured leads is also a good move. Make sure you have an appropriately sized **run ring**, preferably ceramic lined and that the lead has a swivel, to help avoid line twist.

## HOOK LINK MATERIAL



Pic 21.

One thing to remember!! Depending on the depth you are fishing there may be Piranhas, and they will attack anything that is shiny, so for your hook link, try and get a dark / burnished colour. The 100lb single strand from **Pic 21. Malin** comes in a coffee colour which is ideal, or alternatively use a black permanent marker to help disguise the shine. If you are confident that at the depth you are fishing the presence of Piranha is unlikely, then a high strength braid is another option, being more supple than wire and less likely to 'spook' the fish, go for one at 200lb+ such as **Pic 22. Kryston Kraken**.



Pic 22.



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## HOOKS & HOOK-LINKS– THE BUSINESS END

As with all tackle, select the best quality that you can, this particularly applies to hooks, swivels, and hook-link material. Hooks from **Pic 23. Gamakatsu (Pic 24 & Pic 25), Owner and VMC** have been proven to be strong and maintain their sharpness in these harsh conditions. Catfish hooks come in differing patterns and the 'J' is one that consistently performs well. Select sizes between 4/0 to 10/0 which will provide a range for all conditions. It is also wise to carry some smaller hooks, in sizes 1, 1/0 & 2/0 should you wish to target some of the smaller Catfish. Maintain the quality in swivel selection, these should be rated at 120lb -150lb and the 'ball bearing' type are ideal.



**Pic 26.** For single strand SS wire hook-links use the 'Haywire Twist'. Length of hook link is an individual choice, however 10" -15" has proven to work well. For braided hook-links, again roughly the same length, and knots such as the Palomar, Uni, or Snell are robust and ultimately reliable.



As the basic setup is like that often used in UK Carp or Catfish angling albeit on 'steroids', the use of a hair-rig should not be discounted. As this is not widely used on the rivers, if hook-ups are proving tricky, this may provide the edge!! This should be tied using the customary 'knotless knot' technique.

**BARBED OR BARBLESS:** For the Catfish, this is purely down to personal preference. With 'J' patterns, the often-unavoidable gut hook ups with barbed hooks, can be a problem, and lead to damage to the fish. Barbless are far kinder, but you risk hook pulls or hook ejection during the fight. Using a barbed hook and 'crushing' the barb has proven to be the best of both worlds. You can also consider using circle hooks, as we mandate for the Arapaima fishing.

## MISCELLANEOUS

Another few items to consider taking out with you, **Pic 27. Permanent marker pens (black)**, useful for dulling down any terminal tackle that might have a 'shine' or be otherwise attractive to Piranha. **Pic 28. Tape measure**, for estimating weights, fish dimensions in inches – length x (girth x girth) / 800 = lbs. Not as exact as scales but provides for a good estimate and can be used for Catfish & Arapaima. **Pic 29. Hook file**, the fast flow over rocks and sand will eventually dull your hooks. Take a check before each cast to ensure its still sharp. **Pic 30. Predator floats** are often used when freelineing baits for Arapaima, set them up as you would do for pike in the UK, these do help with bite recognition and allow for baits to be presented throughout the water column. See also our **Top Travel Tips** publication at [www.amazon-adventure.co.uk](http://www.amazon-adventure.co.uk).





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## FISHING FOR ARAPAIMA

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** In many of our locations, fishing for Arapaima requires permission from the relevant tribal seniors and this is granted on the strict understanding that the fish are treated with respect, the highest standards of fish welfare and are released unharmed. For these reasons we request all our guests to follow the advice provided by our guides, who as local Amerindians, understand the protocols for catching and handling these incredible fish – Thank you.

Various techniques can be used to catch Arapaima, from fly fishing and lure fishing, to the more customary 'cut bait' approach. For fly fishing, full sinking lines of 300-400g are usual, however we have seen lines of up to 750g used with success. Large articulated weighted streamers with 2/0 or 3/0 tandem rigs have proven effective, along with those that resemble bait fish i.e., match the hatch. For lure fishing, glide baits, spooks, plugs, and jigs all work. Again, those that resemble bait fish prove effective, although differing colours, patterns and retrieve techniques are all worth experimenting with.

However, the most popular and generally most productive technique is with 'cut bait', and whilst the standard 'running rig' works perfectly for the Catfish, it needs adapting for Arapaima.

The principal change is that the bait is free-lined, so there will be no requirement for a lead weight. Mainline will still be braided, at 100lb minimum with a 10' to 15' Monofilament / Fluorocarbon or Co-Polymer leader, spliced to the mainline via an FG Knot (Note that the Albright can be used, however it is bulkier than the FG). As with the Catfish, a braided hook-link should be used, again with a strong swivel. The fundamental difference in the set up however is in the hook, **Pics 31 & 32. barbless circle hooks** are mandatory. **But Why?**

Well, despite their large size and prehistoric looks, Arapaima are very fragile and can be easily harmed through mismanagement. Over the years we have heard many stories of fish being lost through being gut-hooked and therefore we mandate barbless circle hooks. The specific and unique shape of the circle hook allows the bait to be safely withdrawn from the fish, until it reaches its mouth, where the hooks acute point turns, catching in the corner of the mouth, minimising the risk of a gut-hook and the damage caused through trying to remove it, which can often prove fatal for the fish.



The 'take' from an Arapaima is usually very gentle, differing significantly from the screaming runs often experienced with Catfish. In general, once an Arapaima has been spotted and cast to, the reels bail-arm is left open, and the line is held lightly, to feel the fish moving with the bait. Once a level of confidence has been reached that the fish has firmly taken the bait, the bail arm is closed, and the fish is wound into- slowly until the circle hook turns and connects, at which point, a little more pressure can be applied. Note: a conventional 'strike' is not necessary... As with the Catfishing, you will need to have a selection of hooks between 6/0 and 10/0 with the mid-range 8/0 being the size most used. In the UK, sourcing barbless circles in these sizes can be problematic, so if you have barbed hooks, as an alternative, you can fully crush the barb as in **Pic 33**. Also, make sure they are strong, a big Arapaima will easily straighten weak or poor-quality hooks...

Once hooked the Arapaima will use its incredible strength to head for safety, the runs are explosive and even when you think it is tiring out, it will surprise you further. They can also be highly acrobatic and airborne action is to be expected.



**FISH WELFARE:** As the fish comes closer to the boat/shore, let the guides do their job, they know how to handle these powerful creatures and will support you with your photo /video shots, as well as ensure the fish is fully rested, recuperated, and ready for release. At no time are Arapaima to be taken fully out of the water, and interaction should be confined to short duration fully supported lifts, just above the waterline only.



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## REEL SELECTION

For the Catfish and Arapaima, some of the most popular reels we see are from **Shimano** (See Table 1.), however the selection of a good baitrunner can often be influenced by your physical location. In the USA, Shimano provide the 'Thunnus' a great reel for both freshwater and saltwater use. In the UK, these are not widely available, and if you do have one, Shimano will not provide aftercare and service. They do however provide equivalents in the 'Oceanic' and the 'Baitrunner D'. All these reels are remarkably similar although the 'Thunnus' is slightly lower in weight due to its construction materials.

Spool capacity is relatively equal, and with 100lb PowerPro, you will get around 240m or 260 yds on the spool. Drag weights also compare well, with all three sat at around 12Kg / 26Lbs.

As for cost, in the UK the 'Thunnus' will require import and whilst you may be able to source these at around £200, watch out for any taxes which may apply. The 'Oceanic' can be sourced widely in the UK with prices ranging from £120 to £180, so shop wisely. Costs for the Baitrunner D also vary from around £150 to as high as £280, so again, shop around.

Table 1.

Reel Manufacturer Model / Type	Reel Weight (g)	Braid Dia mm / m / yds	Braid Dia mm / m /yds	Braid Dia mm / m / yds	Max Drag Kg / Lbs
Shimano Thunnus 12000	785		0.40 / 330 / 360	0.45 / 240 / 262	12 / 26
Shimano Oceanic 12000	825	0.35 / 500 / 546	0.40 / 320 / 350	0.45 / 240 / 262	12 / 26
Shimano Baitrunner D 12000	850	0.35 / 500 / 546	0.40 / 320 / 350	0.45 / 240 / 262	12 / 26

## BRAID SELECTION

Table 2.

Braid Information			
Lbs	Kg	PowerPro (Closest)	Dia mm (approx)
5	2.28	6.5lb / 3Kg	0.06
10	4.54	9lb / 4Kg	0.08
12	5.44	11lb / 5Kg	0.10
15	6.80		
18	8.16	18lb / 8Kg	0.13
20	9.07	20lb / 9Kg	0.15
25	11.34		
30	13.61	29lb / 13Kg 33lb / 15Kg	0.19 0.23
40	18.14	44lb / 20Kg	0.28
50	22.69	53lb / 24Kg	0.32
60	27.22	66lb / 30Kg	0.36
70	31.75		
80	36.29	88lb / 40Kg	0.41
100	45.36	106lb / 48Kg 121lb / 55Kg	0.43 0.46

There are just so many braids to choose from and it can sometimes be quite confusing... so how do they differ?

Firstly, consider how braided fishing line is constructed. Polyethylene microfilaments are gel spun (*spun together while in partial-liquid form produces a stronger interchain connection*) to create **carriers** — or strands — often under trade names **Dyneema** or **Spectra**. The term 'carrier' is sometimes replaced with 'end' or 'yarn' in braided-line parlance. What's misleading about the braid moniker is that carriers are woven together to create braided line, forming what's known as "pics" at points where they intersect, so as an example, the 832 on the Suffix braid means it has eight strands with a 'pic' count of 32 per inch.



**In General...**eight-carrier braids are smoother, rounder, and easier to cast and in many cases are lower diameter, although the PowerPro 'Maxcuatro' has maintained the four-strand construction and reduced its diameter by around 25%.

Our favourite, **PowerPro** is a brand that has been at the top of the braided mainline game for a long time. Unlike many newer / advanced eight-strand braids, **PowerPro** is of a four-strand construction, meaning that the line is rough in hand and not as smooth as many of the eight strand braids. But, don't let its four-strand development put you off, this lower strand braid is as tough as old boots. Think of it like car tyres, your four-strand braid is like the 4x4 mud tyre – rough, durable, reliable, and perfectly suited to the harsh environments in the Amazon (See table 2).

