

VETTING YOUR CAPTAIN: ESSENTIAL INTERVIEW CHECKLIST

Run through these critical configuration elements with prospective guides prior to booking to guarantee a seamless family trip.

VCRITICAL BOOKING VERIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

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Verify USCG Licensing & Liability Insurance: Ensure the guide holds an active U.S. Coast Guard Captain's License and carries full commercial passenger hull insurance.

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Confirm Blanket Licensing Inclusion: Verify that the vessel's commercial blanket license completely covers all passengers on board for the duration of the run.

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Determine Live Bait Strategy: Inquire if live native bait is caught fresh prior to launch or if the trip relies heavily on artificial profiles.

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Establish Family Accommodations: Confirm the captain organizes high-action variations (croaker, spot, black drum) to maximize hookups for young kids.

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Review Weather Cancellation Thresholds: Secure exact terms regarding bad-weather refunds, heavy wind delays, and itinerary rescheduling.

SEASONAL TARGET MATRIX: KNOW WHAT IS BITING

Align your booking window with regional migration trends to maximize success across backwater flats and coastal inlets.

TARGET SPECIES	PEAK MONTHS	PRIMARY HABITAT ZONES	ACTION PROFILE
Red Drum (Puppy Drum)	Apr – Nov (Year-Round)	Shallow marsh flats, oyster bars, creek mouths	Heavy Pulls
Speckled Trout	Oct – Dec (Fall Run)	Deep bridge holes, structural current seams	High Leap / Aggressive
Black Drum	May – Oct	Deeper dock margins, bridge pilings	Steady Bottom Fight
Flounder	Jun – Sep	Sand margins directly bordering oyster rocks	Tactical Ambush

WHAT TO BRING: FAMILY PACKING GRID

- ☐ Polarized Sunglasses (Spot backwater structure)

☐ Lightweight Layers (Early morning chill protection)

☐ High-Protein Snacks & Bottled Water
- ☐ Non-Marking Shoes (No hard work boots)

☐ Windbreaker Jacket (Spray prevention)

☐ Lotion Sunscreen (No fiberglass-damaging sprays)

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Scan this guide's live QR code using your smartphone camera to browse our verified directory roster, compare vessel configurations, view recent catch reports, and select a local guide directly at <https://topsail.fish/captains/>.

