

# Surfcasting At Montauk

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## One of a Kind

There are only a few angling locations in the world that offer unforgettable fishing and awe inspiring vistas. Montauk is one of those places and it's nice to know that Montauk is in our back yard.

Montauk has a special smell, and I recognize it when I am there, even with my eyes closed. Have you noticed that smell? I look forward to it every time I go, and it has become my sixth sense. Teal colored waters, a majestic lighthouse, the rocky and intimidating south side cliffs, and panoramic views of Block Island Sound are as much a part of the surfcasting experience in Montauk as the fishing. This premier surfcasting location is an angler's Mecca each autumn for the fabulous striped bass run. Here are a few ideas to help to make your Montauk fishing trip enjoyable.

## Timing is Everything

Stripers can be caught in most months of the year, but September is the best time to fish Montauk. Bait flood the shallows at this time of the year on their southern migration. Striped bass locate these bait shoals in a day or two, and the blitzes begin. When gamefish have a feeding frenzy it is called a 'blitz'.

Many beaches experience blitzes, but the ones in Montauk are spectacular. Sometimes the waters from North Bar to the lighthouse are foaming with bait fish and gamefish. These are the days that surfcasters dream about on bone-chilling winter evenings. This great fishing does not come without a price tag – hordes of surfcasters share the same winter dreams as you. These beaches can get crowded and it may be difficult to find space to cast. Veteran anglers may shy away from these compacted conditions, but many thrive on the energy.

Many rules may be broken after being conceived, but 'old timers' who fish Montauk work the south side during the flood tide and the north side on the ebb. They work the south side, west towards the lighthouse on incoming tide, and the North Bar to the lighthouse on the ebb tide. This is a good rule of thumb, but there may be exceptions.

## Tackle

Light tackle is not appropriate gear to fish at Montauk. Light tackle puts anglers at a disadvantage when making long casts with heavy lures. Using heavier tackle will save fish and avoid angler frustration since the bottom



is often strewn with rocks. It is difficult to work light tackle on a crowded beach and fighting big fish is often a lost battle.

Experienced surfcasters use 10 ft or 11 ft rods, appropriately sized reels (see page 2), and 20 lbs test line. Anglers need special equipment to face the elements at Montauk. On rough days, surfcasters wear chest waders and a top to minimize their exposure. A belt should be used to secure the top to the waders for safety. Sandals equipped with special metal studs (also called creepers or korkers), are necessary artillery, and surfcasters may decide to wear wetsuits and other sophisticated gear as a personal choice.

## Lures

There are several hundred lures that can be used to fish for striped bass at Montauk, but beginners should keep things simple. Crucial lures to bring for daytime fishing include pencil poppers, standard poppers, bucktails (white, yellow, or green), and shiny metal lures. Bring a few dozen 1-2 oz bucktails and a jar of split-tail pork rind if you plan to do daytime fishing.

Bucktails (white, green, yellow, black), darters, bottle plugs, and metal lip swimmers are good staples to include in the tackle box for night fishing. Dark colors are usually better at night and lighter colors work well during the day. Yellow darters and bottle plugs are a mainstay to fish Montauk's surf at night.

## Shop and Enjoy

Stop by a local bait and tackle store in Montauk for up-to-the-minute fishing reports and tips about fishing these basic lures for the locations mentioned. Montauk is a unique place for anglers in the fall, but don't get swept away in a fish killing frenzy just because the ocean appears to have an endless fish supply. In my opinion, it's more important to show respect for the sport, other anglers, the fish, and enjoy one of the world's most glorious angling locations.

