

TRAVELING WITH FLY RODS

by Michael Abramowitz

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*Preface: The following article was originally published in the November/December 2013 issue of the **Mid Atlantic Fly Fishing Guide**. You can find more information about the Mid Atlantic Fly Fishing Guide on their [Facebook](#) page.*

Traveling to your local favorite fishing spot does not pose as many problems and challenges as hauling your equipment, and especially your fly rods, by aircraft to distant destinations. The safest way not to damage your rod is to keep the rod in the rod case. In a previous article I discussed fly rod care and covered some of the basics. (See Fly Rod Care After a Day on the Water, February 2010. Ed.)



If you have an SUV, commercial rod carriers are available that fit inside the vehicle or you can make a rod carrier with PVC tubing. One length of PVC is placed across the inside of the vehicle in

Rod tubes come from the rod manufacturer, can be bought commercially or made from common materials found in the local hardware store.

the rear and a second in the front inside of the vehicle. The vehicle may have hook device in place to secure the PVC tubing. An electric plastic tie strap may be used, or a good quality suction cup on the side window. Heavy foam cutouts suspended from the tubes or a simple sling system holds the rod just below the interior of the vehicle roof. The fully assembled rod is inserted into the carrier from the rear of the vehicle. Note that this may not work for all SUVs, especially for longer fly rods.

You may see folks driving down the interstate with a clothing rack in the rear of their car. Two clothes racks, one in the rear and the second in the front of the car can be adapted to carry your fly rod. The racks are reasonably priced and can be found in local stores or on the net.

Another system for local travel is a rod case secured on the roof of the vehicle. This could be as simple as a six inch PVC tube with end caps mounted on the roof. YOUTUBE has videos to show how to make these vehicle roof rod carrying systems.

Ready-made rod carriers are also available. One external commercial rod carrier has two magnets and a tie down to secure it to the roof. Another type of unit is mounted on the vehicle hood and the roof. These can usually be used on cars, truck and SUV's. These carriers are very convenient if you are going to various fishing spots on the same day. Before purchasing a magnetic holder make sure your vehicle body is ferrous, not aluminum like some sports cars. Test with a magnet to make sure the carriers will work before you purchase them. Some units are built using suction cups instead of magnets. You can drive at reasonable speeds with the rods secured using either the magnetic or suction cup setup.



A commercially made rod carrier that fits the underside of a pickup cap.

Photo by Steve Jones

The greater challenge occurs when your travels involve aircraft. We are all aware of increased security with the TSA and airlines. You may not be allowed to travel in the aircraft cabin with a metal fly rod case. A metal rod case looks and feels like a hazardous baseball bat or club. Cloth type covered cases may be easier to get onboard. Traveling from the east coast is not as easy as in the west where one sees more fly rod cases when traveling. Florida may be the one east coast exception where the TSA sees more people traveling with fishing rods.

Many rod manufactures are selling three and four piece rods. These may be approximately 32 inches in length. You often can have one with you in the cabin of the aircraft. When leaving the aircraft make sure to take your rod. It may fall to the far side of the overhead compartment and not be visible and left onboard. Be sure you have all your gear before deplaning. I have built a few seven piece fly rods in 5 weight. I use a very light weight case to hold the rod in the cloth cover. This rod will fit in a backpack carry on. My wife did not like the length of her seven piece rod built for her so I made her rod with six pieces. This rod still casts beautifully. "Hook and Hackle" in Homestead, Pennsylvania sells these rod blanks which are specially fabri cated for them. (Hookhack.com or 1-800-552-8342) can give you information regarding these rods. The number of rod pieces should not deter you from these rods. These multi rods are among my favorite fly rods.

Spey rods are long rods which can be up to 14 feet in length and may need to be with checked luggage. I have heard of fly rod cases arriving at the final flight destination with no rod in the rod case. A locking case for fly rods, Spey and otherwise is preferred for checking rods as baggage.

Many airlines charge for checked in baggage when flying in the United States. International travel has different baggage allowances. Many fishermen and women have concerns that baggage may not arrive with you, arrive damaged or get lost permanently.

Many have figured out how to get a rod or two, waders and boots , reels and fly boxes to be carried onboard. However certain countries, Argentina for example, do not allow fly fishing reels with line to be carried onboard aircraft. Canada has rules about carrying fishing flies onboard. What can you do with a 20 hook? So these items and sharps need to be checked in. As of September 2013, the TSA allows nail clippers to be in carryon luggage, but it is still a good idea to have your nippers and such in your checked baggage.

An expensive yet safer, more reliable option to get your gear to its destination, is to ship it with a commercial carrier such as UPS or FEDEX. Make sure they deliver to more remote locations and find out well ahead of time when you need to ship your gear prior to your departure. For a trip with less travel concerns, check with your airline, and the TSA website (www.tsa.gov/) prior to departure. May you have a safe trip with tight lines.

Mike Abramowitz is an avid flyfisherman from Potomac, Md. He ties flies, occasionally builds rods, and enjoys fishing from a kayak.