

2 New RATs Go To Green Hell

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'Jungle Jeff' and his Randall Adventure Training team return to the Amazon to test the RC-6 and Izula necker!



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After an 18-hour trip from California, the journey had just begun. Continuing our journey on a bus, it seemed as if we had traveled back through time. It was here that I first caught a glimpse of the local cutlery. There were a few Peruvian men who had just finished a hard day's work and boarded the bus with their main tool in their hands—a machete. The next part of this epic journey was the eight-hour boatripe down the Amazon River. Our first three minutes off the boat and in the jungle would be something that I will never forget. One of the guys jumped back at the sight of a Fer de Lance snake; Aguilar (Peruvian instructor) quickly dealt with it and reminded us that where there is one there are two, make camp and good night. "Bienvenido a Perú" (Welcome to Peru).



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The Sequel

My second trip to Peru was with the RAT Team, as they were providing training for the BNN Productions TV show, “Try Before You Die.” The star of the show was trained for one day on the basics of jungle survival, then taken out to a remote part of the jungle with a machete and survival vest where he would have to spend the night and make it out of the jungle the next day. As for the rest of the group, it was time to play with some knives!

Over the course of a week in the jungle, I had a chance to field test some new products from RAT Cutlery. First was the long awaited Izula. I remember being younger and hearing the lion was the king of the jungle but trust me, it's really the ant! Not just any ant but the meanest, toughest ant locally referred to as the Izula. This is where RAT Cutlery came up with their name for the Izula neck and survival kit knife.

With an overall length of 6.25 inches and low weight of only 3 ounces with sheath, this is a lightweight neck knife that can handle the toughest chores. Rat Cutlery uses 1095 high carbon steel for their knives. Blade length on the Izula is 2-5/8 inches with a handle length right around 3.5 inches, making the Izula a very comfortable knife for long-term use.



On the second day in the jungle we were planning to have fish for lunch, which meant someone had to make a fire. Making a fire in the jungle is truly one of the most important skills a person could possess. The key to fire in wet, humid conditions is preparation. It is a slow process and patience is the main ingredient. The first task was splitting wet wood 1 to 2 inches thick to get to the dry inside, then splitting them down again to pencil size pieces. At this stage I made a number of fuzz sticks and a pile of wood shavings for kindling. A large green leaf is used to collect all the wood shavings and is a good way of keeping the fuzz sticks dry and off the jungle floor. The edge geometry made whittling fuzz sticks easy and the full size handle made all aspects of firecraft a pleasure! A fire can be used to boil and purify water as well as cook your food to get rid of those nasty parasites, so, in a sense, fire could mean food and water in the jungle. This can all be done with a machete but is much easier and faster with a small handy knife.

The pink Izula was used to cut down a fresh green sapling that was still standing. This was done by batoning the blade in at 45-degree angles, then working around the small tree until it gave out and fell over. When your machete is being used by the others around camp, this can be done in seconds, which is another good reason to have a small sharp knife with you and the skill to use it. This sapling was then used to make a figure-four trap in hopes of procuring more food for the remaining days. This little knife really shines when it comes to doing the fine cutting jobs that require control. Making trap notches seemed effortless with the small blade. Our evening concluded with the Peruvians serving up some fresh papaya slices cut with the Izula. In my opinion, an 18-inch Tramontina machete paired with the Izula will make a perfect combo for the tropics. The Izula sheath is made out of Kydex and comes with a firesteel and whistle; it really is a neck knife and survival kit all in one. Sheath and cord wrapping instructions are included.

RC-6 Action

Overall length for the RC-6 is 11.75 inches. Blade is 6.5 inches from the choil to the tip and sports a full flat grind and drop point. The sheath features an ambidextrous Molded Sheath by Blade-Tech. Ten eyelets surround the tan-colored sheath, giving the user many options for tying cord, fishing line, or attaching more gear. The textured thumb area that aids in easy deployment with little thumb pressure is one of the best features of the sheath.

Out playing in the jungle, I got a chance to put the RC-6 through a few realistic field tests. Shelter is always high on the list of priorities anywhere you go in the outdoors, so I addressed that task without delay. First, I chopped down small saplings for shelter poles. Anyone who has chopped a great deal with a sizeable chopper may have experienced some discomfort in the pinky finger due to the common parrot beak-style handle. Rat Cutlery appears to have solved this annoyance with the design of the RC-6 handle; it's comfortable and easy on the pinky. Next up, batoning shelter poles cross grain. A stout baton and a knife can easily make short work of big jobs normally done by a machete. When the Dutch film crew lost their only machete in a river, they found that out the hard way.



During a boat ride along the Amazon, the crew picked up some Loricariidae fish—more commonly known as “suckermouth armored catfish.” In all honesty, they looked like Japanese Samurai warriors with fins. This was a chance to see the RC-6 in action cleaning these prehistoric-looking fish. A couple of well-placed whacks to the head put the Loricariidae out. The thick, 3/16-inch spine acted as a hammer for this task and this was a good thing, as there was more chopping than I expected to see while cleaning these fish. The true test of the RC-6 came later while butchering a caiman. To puncture through the thick skull, a heavy baton was used to pound the knife's pommel in a tip-first fashion. I

know I wasn't the only one who was thinking the tip would break off, but it didn't. Cutting open a caiman has been compared to slicing a thin piece of sheet metal. This job required the strength of two hands to rip open the belly. Finally, the powerful jaws were pried open with the RC-6 blade and handle. No chipping of the blade or damage to the Micarta handle was evident.

Is this the one knife do-all? For our “jungle camp,” it did all that was necessary for a village, boat, camp and hunting knife. Let's not forget about the poor Dutch who lost their only machete after they fell into a river, which could have been a matter of life or death for them. Luckily, they had the RC-6.

Sharpening Situation

Every village we visited had at least one large flat stone for sharpening kitchen knives and machetes. I was able to bring back the edge on the RC-6 and Izula with one of these flat stones, not factory sharp but I was able to get rid of any burrs from the heavy batoning. In all honesty, there wasn't much to resharpen, as the knives were still reasonably functional after several days of hard use. As I returned stateside I used only a fine EZE-LAP diamond stone to bring back the razor sharpness of both the Izula and the RC-6.

Looking back on my journey to Peru, I thought about the role a knife plays in the villages and in the field. I came to the simple conclusion that these knives were not just used, but depended upon!