



The Chilean Andes provide a stunning backdrop for a fly fishing adventure. Unfortunately, the well known areas and rivers in Chile, and also Argentina, attract lots of attention and anglers. Sometimes you can feel as if you're fishing the famous rivers in Montana – with lots of company. The great variety of waters fished by Patagonia Base Camp Lodge offer an excellent fly rod opportunity, and maybe more important, offer a spectacular, secluded environment, free from the crowds. A client who has been there three times, Rob Pizzie, can make this statement after his recent trip: “In my three trips here, 24 days fishing collectively, I can probably count the other anglers I have seen on the fingers of one hand.”



There are many reasons why for the last several years this has been our favorite Chilean destination, but Rob's statement in the previous paragraph provides the foundation for that reasoning. This is also one of those unique fisheries that provides a stimulating place for newcomers to learn and enjoy their first successes as well as offering challenges to keep a seasoned veteran fly rodder excited. The photos submitted for this photo essay come from the group of five in the photo at left: I to r – David Cantor, Rob Pizzie, Annette Pizzie, Gretchen Cantor, and John Landis. Two of them, Gretchen and David, were experiencing their first time ever presenting a fly to fish. Rob's wife, Annette, learned the basics of fly fishing on a previous trip here and this was her second time fly fishing. Rob is a veteran fly rodder and the fifth member, John Landis, is a globe hopping fly angler who has fished the Seychelles, New Zealand, Alaska, Africa, Belize, etc. Additionally, John has become accomplished at capturing the special moments of fly fishing with his camera.

Options: Patagonia Basecamp has an array of options unique in Patagonia. All the options offer the feeling of exclusivity referred to by Rob in the first paragraph. John stated what keeps him returning, “I never see another fisherman and the main appeal is the variety of the fishing menu.” A drift boat is used to cover the larger rivers while walk'n'wade is used for the smaller, easier to access waters.



Some secluded lagoons and lakes can be accessed via hiking or using horses. Below, l to r: Rob and Annette use horses to pack to a spot where a drift boat can be put in for a day drift (the boat is packed on the horses and assembled on the spot). Rob described arriving at the spot, "The Gaucho left us and the guide inflated the raft. By the time we were ready to float I had caught three nice rainbow!" That's Rob on the gray demonstrating his riding acumen. Annette tries to stare down some of the local wildlife. Gretchen and David set off on a hike in the Andes. John said his largest rainbow (26.5 inches) came from a mountain lake accessed via a hike.



Passionate fly fishers feel that one of the great attractions of our sport is your fly rod takes you to many of the world's most beautiful natural environments. The landscapes of Patagonia and the Andes certainly meet that criteria. At least one of the rivers has class 4 and 5 rapids.



In addition to the main lodge, there are three other possible overnights stays that are a part of the operation. One is a small cabin at the half way point of a two day float down the Palena River. The second is a stationary tent camp on a high country river – first two photos below. Note the wood framed beds – this is really NOT roughing it. The third option is new for this year – a sister lodge across the crest of the Andes in Argentina. This lodge is part of a large estancia which is a working cattle ranch. It's the third option in Argentina that has caused John and Rob to increase their stay from the standard seven night package to a new ten day program.



There certainly are many different shades of brown (and a little green) in brown trout, especially in Patagonia.



Below, l to r: David and Gretchen get ready to push off into the river. David and Gretchen with one of their first fish ever caught on a fly. Back at the lodge, Annette must be doing a good job of pouring because Gretchen seems pleased. What ARE those two bumblebees doing????!?!?!?



Thoughts from a new fly fisher, David describes their experience: “Gretchen and I had always been interested in fly fishing, but never seriously attempted it. When our good friend John asked us to join him at Patagonian Basecamp, we saw it as an opportunity to finally get engaged in the sport. We took a couple of casting lessons at home, but were true beginners when we arrived at the Basecamp. The experience was fantastic. The guides were extremely patient, even when our inept casting scared the fish away. We did manage to land some very nice fish, with lots of help and encouragement. The scenery was out of this world, and we had the rivers to ourselves. We were also very impressed by the skill of the guides as they took us through some very technical whitewater stretches. All-in-all, a friendly and welcoming experience for us newcomers, and a wonderful week.”

Regarding his enjoyment of his time at Patagonia Basecamp Lodge, Rob had this to say: “Marcel and his team run a top notch operation. The fishing is great, the lodge is very comfortable, the food is excellent and the atmosphere is friendly. Couldn't hope for a better experience.” Annette added, “Although I like to fish, the high spots for me were the scenery, the horse riding, and the many white water sections of the rivers.”



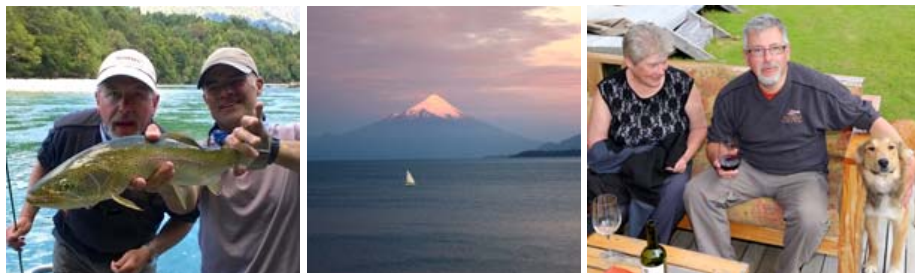
Above, l to r: The main lodge. Pre-dinner cocktails around the fire pit. Carving up lamb off the pit - great pride is taken in the meal preparation resulting in the food being a highlight. Dinner on the back deck. The entire operation reflects a caring, “hands on,” owner-managed endeavor where attention to detail is a priority. When you consider the remoteness of the lodge, the quality maintained is truly exceptional.



Patagonia is a designation for a large geographical area which encompasses the south-central part of both Argentina (left) and Chile (right). Different from a political entity, it designates a culture present in this part of South America.



Below, l to r: Annette with a 'bow. Wood heated hot tub at the main lodge. Pretty rainbow. John stalks a brown. Through the rapids. Sit down shore side lunch break. Casting in Argentina with Andes in background. John with a nice 'bow. Rob, guide, and a happy fish about to be released. Sailboat, mountain, and snow capped Andes peak. Annette and Rob and a friend relax at the lodge.



It seems that often the last fish of a trip is the most memorable. John relays this story of his last fish: “My largest brown was 25 1/2 inches taken on the last cast for the trip, close to the lodge. There was a confluence point above the pool where we saw a large brown rise. I cast a #6 gypsy king and instead of the brown, hooked a large rainbow. I cast the same fly again and missed the large brown. We added a dropper and on the next cast got the brown.”

Good photo essays all have one thing in common.....they begin with a great selection of photos. Thanks to John, Rob, Annette, David, and Gretchen for supplying a great collection.

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