



NEW ZEALAND TOPICS IN THIS ISSUE:

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EXPECTATIONS AND “HITTING IT RIGHT” – REPORTS



The thrill of stalking and sight fishing to the trophy rainbows and browns in the crystalline rivers and streams of New Zealand is where an adventure begins. Certainly, there is a lot more to a NZ visit than the fishing, but for us fly fishers, it all starts with the fishing and the uniqueness of the NZ fishery.

When you “hit it right,” a good New Zealand day on the water is the stuff of lifetime memories. Where else is it possible to spend the day sight casting to fish of 4 to 8 pounds (and occasionally larger) in a spectacular natural environment while enjoying the company of many of the planet’s top guides?



Like all world class fisheries, the NZ fishery is susceptible to the whims of weather and, at times, uncooperative fish. The reports below come from clients who had days this season (in some cases “weeks”) of “hitting it right.” They are meant to define the meaning of “hitting it right” in New Zealand with a fly rod in hand.

Generally, fishing in New Zealand is distinguished by the quality of the overall experience and not in terms of numbers of fish. The expectancy on most days may be one or two fish released. Using USA standards for the size of the fish, that fish is often the fish of a lifetime. To release that one or two trophies, you may have stalked and sight cast to 15 fish, having 5 or 6 of them eat providing an intense fly fishing experience.

However, quotes like “.....landed 42 fish over four pounds in 5 days, most of these on dries!” are not that uncommon when conditions are right and the angler has the right tools and experiences in their fly fishing arsenal.

From Robert Meiswinkel on a family trip with Ana and their 5 year old son, Nico (Robert and Nico - photo top left):

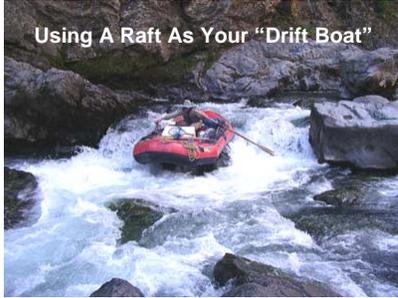
“The largest I took was around seven plus.....with most around 5+ lbs. The fish were ‘on the job’ that day. I even had a fish come back to the same dry twice. Most of the fish were caught on dries.....The guides were terrific. I was always amazed at their ability to spot fish. Kevin worked especially well with Ana and his determination transferred into the nice photo (above left) of her proudest fly fishing moment.”



From Scooter (photo at right with rainbow) and Melanie Walters who combined touring and one day of salt water fly fishing into their trip:

“Super trip again on our second New Zealand go-round! Thanks for your fine work. Fish news-----41 landed in 6 guided river days -----best fish 8.25 lb. rainbow-----average fish around 5 lbs.----- Best days were one day of 13

fish and another day of 14. The saltwater day was really fun with Melanie landing a nice snapper and I landed a yellowtail of around 35 lbs.”



Using A Raft As Your “Drift Boat”



On A Spring Creek



From Rick Radoff (left above) touring with his wife Fran and son-in-law Scott Eldridge (above right and right center):

“The whole trip was fantastic.....Scott and I caught 31 fish in the three days on our Fiordland camp-out, and hooked about 15 or more that we didn't land. On the North Island, we caught about 22 fish.....guides were excellent.....50/50 on the dry's vs. the nymphs, we mostly tried the dry first and if that didn't work, then we followed with the nymph....it was 99% sight caught..... No fish was under 20", most were in the 21" to 23" range. Scott and I both caught a 24-1/2" fish and we each had a 6# fish. Most fish were in the 4 and 5 pound range.”

A personal note on our trip this year – certainly not the best fishing I have had in my half dozen New Zealand trips. We hit tough weather and water conditions in some places and “two fish days” were the norm with one special day of releasing a 6.75, 7.25, and 7.5 lb brown – two taken on dry flies in less than a foot of water. We did have one 15+ fish day, all on dries, in a small stream on a very isolated sheep station with several locked gates, but they were all rainbows with an average size of 18 – 20 inches and not the traditional trophy fish we usually pursue.



NZ ON TWO DIFFERENT PATHS – TOURING AND FLY FISHING



I like Rae Hill's following comment because it does explain NZ's #1 attraction: “New Zealand is an amazing place and Richard and I agreed that their best natural resources are the people. Many thanks for helping plan a trip we won't ever forget.” In NZ (and in most places on the globe) it is the people who make a country what it is and the Kiwi's are indeed special! Rae and Richard combined some touring



with fly fishing in a few select places following a format that is similar to many of our Kiwi itineraries, each one custom designed (at left, Rae with the brown and copter in the background and above, Richard with a 'bow).



While there are itineraries that are designed just for “hard core” fly fishing, the majority of our clients are after an adventure combining some of NZ's unique fly fishing with touring the country. The right combination of “how much touring” and “how many days of fly fishing” depends largely on the individuals, their specific interests, the amount of time they have, and the budget.

For instance, some of the interests of Linda and Gordon Stanley are easy to see in the comments below – they enjoy cooking, fine cuisine, and visiting the wine country. Their itinerary included stops in NZ's top wine producing regions as well as fly fishing and nature pursuits. They had one stop on the North Island and then toured the South Island from north to south. Also, Linda used the challenging waters of NZ to take her *first fish ever on a fly* – the beautiful rainbow at right captured on her first day with a fly rod on the water. Gordon kept a detailed diary of the trip and the following excerpt came after a stop in the Marlborough region before embarking on a days drive through the alps: “We found some interesting wines including some beautiful Rieslings (good competition



for the Germans) and some excellent Pinot Noir. We purchased a few bottles, some really nice organic olive oils, some gourmet chutney, and chocolate from the local stores, so we are stocked up for a long drive and a picnic or two as we head further along our journey on the South Island of NZ. Tomorrow we head toward Arthur's Pass (in the South Island Alps) via the west coast."



At the head of the class representing the "fish 'til you drop" group are two of our favorite fly fishing "kids," Barbara and Charlie Renfrew (at left). They have made a New Zealand adventure an annual part of their early year travels and approach each day in New Zealand to maximize their time on the water. A full day spent walking and wading a NZ stream is a physically taxing experience, one that can take the measure of some 40 and 50ish fly fishers if repeated several days in a row. Barbara and Charlie could fish many of those younger folks right into the ground with their youthful fly rod exuberance.

DREAM FISH – THE 10# NEW ZEALAND BROWN

The dream of taking a 10+ pound trout in New Zealand from a gin-clear stream, while not as regular a happening as fifteen years ago, is still very real. While the average fish may be in the three to four pound range, six and seven pounders are common, and the ten pound fish happens often enough that the possibility is always there. For instance, the top lodges and best independent guides will have several ten pound plus fish taken during the course of a season, many on dry flies and from small streams or rivers.

Betty and Paul Wilms toured both islands, covering the South Island from tip to tip and about half of the North Island. Fishing was their main objective however they did a lot of hiking, touring, and photography. The trip highlight occurred on the very last day of a three week itinerary while fishing from Poronui Ranch on the North Island. On a copter fly out to a remote portion of the Rangitikei River, Paul explains the adventure which resulted in an unforgettable brown (photo at right) measuring 29.5 inches long and 16.5 inches girth:



"The day was good consisting of breaking off a number of big fish and releasing some nice ones including a seven pound brown and a six pound rainbow. In the mid-afternoon, my guide and I simultaneously spotted three large trout about 100 feet ahead of us in 16 inches of slow moving water over a fine gravel bed. We crept up to about 40 feet and I started casting to the two fish to the right and my guide stopped me, instructing me to go for the big brown on the left. The fly landed about a foot and a half to its right and the fish immediately turned and engulfed the fly. The fish was bigger than I expected and took off for deeper waters. I was literally running, tripping, trying to keep my line from snagging on larger rocks while hearing my guide yelling instructions. After 20 minutes and 150 yards downstream, we finally netted the brown, 29.5 inches x 16.5. That fish earned us the lodge 'fly over' and a champagne toast on our last day in NZ."

Note: while the photo may not show it clearly, this fish had brilliant markings with red spots covering fully the middle portion of his flank.

If only we could guarantee that every one climatic day like Paul's!!!



of our New Zealand itineraries would result in a

EXTRA SPECIAL NZ EXPERIENCES

Even in a special place like New Zealand, some aspects of the destination can be “extra” special - a potpourri of some of those options:

Milford Sound fly over and Fiordland River combo: Robert Meiswinkel did an outstanding job of capturing the magic of this special NZ day: “The copter fly out over Milford Sound combined with fishing a Fiordland river for the day was truly a spectacular experience. We added about 10 minutes of flight time to get a better view of the immense glacially carved gorges that abound there. The water of this unnamed stream had clarity unlike any freestone river I had ever seen. Fish were up to 28 inches long.....They were very healthy and their weight only seemed to be an adaptation to the unique eco-system. These large “blue” checked browns were as unique as the environment they live in. They would cruise the tailouts eating nymphs and rising often but never in the same place. Working our way up this trackless river through jungle like dense beech forests will always be one of my most memorable fishing experiences.”



Guided Camp Outs: For those that enjoy “roughing it” a little, there are many camp out and hut options that can be included in a NZ itinerary, but one of the more spectacular may be a guided two or three night stay in the designated “Wilderness Area” of Fiordland – this is country where even helicopter access is not allowed.

New copter programs: All copter fly out days in NZ are special, but for something unique, many pilots and guides are offering up a new approach – have the copter stay with you for the entire day rather than just a drop off and pick-up. In some areas, this allows you to cherry pick pools near a rivers headwaters where the productive runs are very far apart. Or, fish two or more rivers in the same day in the same general area. Prices vary, but most are based on 2 hours running time for approx. \$2400NZ.



Family or group residence: For a large family or group of good friends, up to ten people, the owner’s residence at Poronui Ranch can be rented. This is a spectacular NZ style structure overlooking the river that runs through the center of this 17,000 acre property. Meals can either be taken in the main lodge dining room or a special cook can be provided for in-house food preparation. There are other unique properties such as this that can be combined with a Poronui stay for a group that wishes to stay together.

TOUR OF NZ VIA SLIDE PRESENTATION IN SF BAY AREA

During the next month, our NZ slide tour will be presented several times throughout the San Francisco Bay Area and in the Napa Valley at our fly fishing theater. If you’d like to discuss an appointment to have the slide tour visit your home or office (or visit us in the Napa Valley), hit “reply.”

ADDITIONAL INFO

At the bottom of the New Zealand page on our website, www.flyfishingadventures.org, are many recaps and descriptions of the overall New Zealand experience. Many are in the form of client reports, people who have provided meaningful and, in some cases, detailed feedback on their trips.

PHOTO CREDITS – top to bottom: Banner photo – Rick Radoff; Robert and Nico – Ana Meiswinkel; Ana – Kevin Payne; Scooter – Melanie Walters; 4 photo sequence with raft and spring creek – Rick Radoff; big brown in water – Betty Wilms; Rae and Richard Hill; wine and Linda first fish – Gordon Stanley; The Renfrews – Nigel Birt; Brown and Rainbow from 10# day – Betty Wilms; “The Special Moment” – Betty Wilms; top copter – Robert Meiswinkel; bottom copter – Melanie and Scooter Walters; Pretty Brown - Don Nelson.



Either phone or drop us an e-mail if you have questions or would like more information about any of our destinations.

**An enthusiastic traveling fly fisherman,
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