

ARGENTINA TRIP REPORT – TIPILIUKE LODGE

We arrived at Tipilike Lodge the afternoon of February 15 and planned to mix three days of fishing with a day of golf and other activities. Tipiliuke staff picked us up promptly at the airport and within 20 minutes we arrived at the Lodge. We were warmly greeted by the staff who had readied warm and fresh empanadas with beverages; ready to recharge us for the evening. After getting settled we went for a horse back ride to see a bit of the 50,000 acre property. The property is beautiful with the backdrop of Tipiliuke peak in the distance. The horse back ride was engaging with the many Argentinian birds, wild boar, and red stag that were abundant. The gauchos also gave us some history of the property and its owners.

Our 3 days of fishing were busy and the fish were very responsive to dry and wet flies. We caught mostly rainbows with some brown trout. Using 5 weight rods, we were surprised by the strength of the fish in the Chimehuin River. A 15-18 inch fish was common, and all of these took runs during the catch. According to the resort manager, the past winter was extremely lighter in snowfall and water levels were about 2 feet lower than normal. Fortunately, fish were still plentiful. We did catch some larger fish, greater than 20 inches, but they were not easy to get to the net. Landing some of the bigger fish really required a deft, patient hand and a timely net from the guide. We all lost some very big fish that fought for a few minutes and then broke the line. At least having the opportunity to hook, play and see those fish made the effort worthwhile.

We heard from other fly fishermen that the Patagonia wind can be daunting. We had sun for 2 days with little wind and 1 day of partly cloudy skies and strong wind. It was the most wind we have experienced at about 25 knots with gusts higher than that. Nonetheless, casting primarily with the usefulness of side casting we successfully caught some very nice fish. The guides we had, Federico and Adrian, were very experienced and took us to prime fish spots and put us on fish of all different sizes. We had the opportunity to wade and fish from the boat and employed a combination of overhead, back and roll casts, depending on the required placement. The guides changed flies regularly if a particular fly or set up was not getting a response from the fish. One day we had a picnic lunch on the river that was befitting a king and queen. It was a hardy lunch washed down with delicious Malbec and still water. Our al fresco dining area was a beautiful, partially shaded spot that overlooked cliffs that lined this particular section of river. A siesta was in the forecast, however, we still had miles to float and more fish to catch. The culmination of that afternoon resulted in Lisa and I both catching a rainbow and brown at the same time while wading and bringing them to the net together. You couldn't have asked for a better finish.

Overall, our trip to Patagonia was memorable and we would like to return for a future visit. The Lodge is 5 star with delicious Argentinian cuisine, wines a plenty, and a full bar. The staff is so very accommodating and go the extra mile to make sure everything is perfect. On cooler days they always had a comforting wood fire to greet us as we returned from fishing. The staff even checked us in for our Aerolineas Argentina flights and printed boarding passes.

For those that don't fish, there is a lot to do at the Lodge and area. This includes hiking, horse back riding, yoga, massage, visiting the San Martin de los Andes town, a unique opportunity to visit an art gallery, challenging golfing within 20 minutes of the Lodge, and

just relaxing on the property. There is also a sauna and hot tub. One guest spent 4 days doing some bird watching in the surrounding National Park while his wife entertained herself by fly fishing.

LISA AND DAVE PICCONE, JEFF KEEFER