



Cubs And Mom Crossing, Kamchatka



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The Kamchatka Peninsula, on the eastern edge of Russia, has been called by sports fishermen the “new Alaska.” This giant peninsula (roughly 25% longer than the state of California) is largely unsettled and, unlike the “old Alaska,” uncrowded and has many intriguing rivers flowing into the oceans. Many of those rivers are home to what several believe is the world’s best wild rainbow trout fishery (certainly, the only collection of wild rainbow photos I’ve seen to rival those in this report came from Jurassic Lake and its Barrancoso River in Argentina).

Kamchatka does not have the array of world class lodges that dot Alaska – many think this is part of the appeal of this wilderness. Rather, there are only a couple of remote lodges which fall short of the ambiance of a top notch Alaska lodge. Most of the fishing is done from float trips. The float trips

vary from the real “rough it” type camping trip to the more tame floats which use stationary camps and cabins along the way for lodging.

This report consists of a portion of the super collection of photos submitted by Jerry Saltzgaber (above, left) and Brian Hodges (at right). Although each guy used a different approach, both trips were on the Zhupanova River. Jerry combined a week long float trip on the upper portion of the river using stationary, but rustic, lodging along the way with a week at a lodge on the lower portion of that same river. Brian’s trip took place a few weeks later and utilized the same lodge on the lower Zhupanova River.



Below, l to r: shoreside lunch on the float trip, the Zhupanova, rainbow, stationary cabin on float, cook at work in his cooking cabin on the float trip.



Above, l to r: two rainbows bracketing a pair of Kunzha (Siberian whitespotted char)

Jerry on the rainbows: “.....biggest rainbows I have ever caught - fat & full of fight. Using a mouse was the best of all. They just killed it. Sometimes they would hit to stun the mouse and then come back to eat it. The takes I liked the best were when they came out of the water and crushed/ate it in one big boom. Most rainbows were over 25 inches & lots of them. I caught a 29, 31 & 31 ½ inch bows.”

Below: “fish on”, three nice rainbows, and a curious observer.



Above, l to r: Kunzha, float trip group, Brian’s 12# bow, and stunning scenery

Brian on the fishing: “All our rainbow takes were on the surface, all on mice. Some of the takes were subtle while others were not. A highlight for me - catching a 12lb pure rainbow at lunch on a mouse while wade fishing on my own will never be forgotten (photo, third from left above). Kunzha are fantastic. Not jumpers, but bulldogs and rollers. They take mostly large streamers.”



From Jerry: “Trip far exceeded expectations! Hospitality was fantastic. Everyone was really into making your experience a good one. Splitting the two weeks into a float trip and a lodge stay was a great combination. Floating was more tiring, but then you were more in the wild. But it was the fish that made the trip. In addition to the rainbows, also caught a 34 & 36 inch Kunzha. Bears everywhere. Loved it!!! I will do this again.”

Below: shots of the lodge.



LOGISTICS

Logistics in getting to Kamchatka from the USA have never been easy, however, during the last few years they were extremely difficult as they canceled the flight from Anchorage to the entry city in Kamchatka, Petropavlovsk. In 2012, they reinstated that flight making it a relatively short, approximately four hour flight from Anchorage (the latitude of Kamchatka is similar to British Columbia).

After arriving in Petropavlovsk, you board a Russian army helicopter for a flight with spectacular scenery to the river you will be fishing. On my trip years ago, we used a helicopter that had fought in Afghanistan and had bullet holes in the fuselage.

The choices of rivers and outfitters are numerous ranging from float trips for the very hardy outdoorsman to the more tame float experience referenced in this report to a lodge stay. The Kamchatka Peninsula is an immense wilderness and this trip is a real adventure into a pristine area of Russia with some of the world's finest trout fishing available.



PHOTO CREDITS: Thanks to Jerry Saltzgeber and Brian Hodges for the submission of an outstanding selection of photos to choose from in assembling this photo essay.....so many fabulous "fish photos".....we just didn't have the space to include all of them.

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