

NEWSLETTER #19 - DECEMBER 2003

Leland Fly Fishing Travel Newsletter –December '03

TOPICS IN THIS ISSUE:

- SF Shop Day, Next Wed 12/17 – Alaska Featured
- Trip Report – Crocodile Bay, Costa Rica
- Fly Fishing Quips and Quotes
- Striped Bass – New Delta Record On The Fly
- Fly Fishing Travel Gift Certificates.....or just gifts

This is the nineteenth edition of our monthly newsletter with updates on great fly fishing venues and insights for our traveling fly fishers. We want to help you match the right location with your fly fishing goals and objectives and properly prepare you to fully enjoy the experience. We've been to most locations and pride ourselves on our ability to research new sites. Whatever unbiased information on timing and locations we can provide comes at the same cost to you as booking direct – i.e., no extra cost.

SF SHOP DAY NEXT WED – ALASKA FEATURED

Fly Fish Alaska: a slide presentation featuring the varied species available in Alaska. Also, the best areas, times, lodges, and locations with a focus on trophy rainbow trout and fishing with the brown and grizzly bears of Katmai National Park. Alaska shows will be at 12:30pm and 5:00pm. Also, at 4:00pm, we'll be showing our "Fly Fishing Earth's Pristine Destinations" slides. I'll be in the shop from 10:30am through the evening and look forward to meeting any of you that have a free minute to stop in. In addition to the scheduled times mentioned above, I'm also available for private viewing of slides of any of our destinations on an appointment basis (including our last weeks trip to Crocodile Bay). Please hit reply if you'd like to arrange an appointment and we'll target your interests.

CROCODILE BAY LODGE, COSTA RICA – TRIP REPORT

(this is an abbreviated version of our trip report on Crocodile Bay Lodge – a full day-by-day dairy of our trip can be e-mailed via a "word document.")

We've added Crocodile Bay to our "A" list of destinations after receiving very positive reports from trusted travel clients. This was my first personal visit. My wife, Marte, and I spent the first week in December fishing and enjoying Crocodile Bay Lodge on the Osa Peninsula in the southwest corner of Costa Rica. Looking at a map, the Golfo Dulce (the large bay bordered by the Osa) is easily located just north of the Panama border on the Pacific coast.

What it is:

- a quality tropical lodge in one of the "most ecologically intense places on earth, the Osa Peninsula" (as described by National Geographic).
- People were wonderful – from the maintenance people to all the hotel staff and guides, everyone was eager to accommodate and make our stay as pleasant as possible.
- Food was "good to great" and several choices were provided for each meal.
- Accommodations range from comfortable, air-conditioned double queen rooms to three bedroom houses which can be rented by a family or group of friends.
- Also, conference facilities for up to 80 people are available.
- Rods and reels (fly and gear equipment available for clients to use at no-charge), boats and motors, and virtually all equipment was top quality and well maintained.
- A multi-purpose destination. Most of the people we met during our week were couples combining fishing with the varied activities available including rain forest tours (even repelling in the forest canopy and waterfalls for the adventurous), butterfly farm (on property), kayaking, beach and rain-forest horseback rides, bird watching, world-class surfing, snorkeling and diving, botanical gardens, and gold panning.

- One of the world's best destinations for trophy offshore sailfishing (both fly and gear) for fish that average 90-100 pounds – a very large average size sailfish. Also, the offshore fishing is great for dorado and, during the right times, marlin and tuna.
- Inshore (the bay and coastline) provide trophy roosterfish, snappers, trevally, snook, jacks, and skip jack tuna.
- An area with very defined weather patterns. The rainy season normally ends in early Dec – unfortunately for us, that would probably mean mid-Dec this year as we caught the end of the rainy period. The summer starts at the conclusion of the rainy season and they have very little rain with mostly blue skies through April.

What it's not:

- The “pure fly fishing destination” I was hoping for. I was determined to spend my time fly fishing hoping that I would find a “Belize type” snook, jack, and snapper fishery with the added bonus of roosterfish and the offshore options. The only real inshore “sight and stalk” fly rod experience (that appeared to be reliable) were the schools of 2-4 pound black skip jack tuna inside the bay. On a 7 or 8 weight rod, these were great fish and could be taken by watching for the numerous schools chasing minnows on the surface in the mornings. We could get our boat within 40 to 60 feet of the exploding fish and put a cast into them - a fun way to start the day when we fished inshore. My number one goal was to take a large roosterfish on the fly. While I did manage one small 7-pound “schoolie rooster” on a popper, I realized after three days of trying that the big rooster I was looking for would be taken by live bait and not by casting a fly to a sighted fish. However, we did take two 30 pounders, one 40, and a magnificent 50 pound fish on live bait after I decided that I was no longer a “purist.” I also took a beautiful 6# Golden Trevally on a clouser while blind casting to rocky shorelines.
- Offshore – originally, I didn't plan to do any offshore fishing because of my strong tendency to motion sickness. And I was aware that the best offshore fishing doesn't heat up until January. However, the dinner time conversation got the best of me as I listened to the success stories of the day and getting a sailfish on the fly sounded exciting. Our first offshore day resulted in a 25 pound dorado taken on a fly. Three sails were raised and two were hooked on a cast fly – one had the hook pull loose and the second broke the class tippet after an electrifying run. The second of our offshore days was greeted with poor weather and the only fish taken was an 8 pound skip jack tuna with a cast fly to a school that was crashing bait. I also learned an effective new approach to preparing my stomach to deal with the motion of the offshore boat!!
- It's not Mexico or the typical Central American country – Costa Rica is a wonderful country that has set itself apart from other Central American countries. A forward thinking government has poured the country's resources into education, health services and infrastructure. It's the most politically and socially stable country south of our border. The people we found throughout Costa Rica were a very positive aspect of the entire experience.

Logistics: Left SFO on American at 10:30am, connected through Dallas to San Jose, Costa Rica landing about 9:00pm (Central Time). Overnights in San Jose and took a 50 minute flight the next morning to Puerto Jimenez (5 minutes from the lodge). Returning, left Puerto Jimenez at 9:40 and landed in San Fran at 10:45 that evening. I think Continental has similar schedules connecting through Houston.

FLY FISHING QUIPS AND QUOTES

“...the sporting qualities of a fish are dependent neither on its size or its weight, but on the effort of concentration, the skill and mastery it demands from the fisherman.”

Charles Ritz

DELTA STRIPED BASS RECORD

Last months newsletter mentioned some delta striper results and a “fantasy day” had by Paul Wilms. Well, Paul is back and this time with what I think is a delta record for a striper caught on a fly. While fishing with Mike Costello last week, Paul released a 42 pounder. Those of you who have seen the Belize video will

recognize Paul – he's the guy who modeled the pink Tarponwear pants and had the big tarpon almost spool him. Lots of big fish taken in the delta this season. 20 pounders have been fairly common and some 30's have showed up – then Paul's 42 (he was not wearing the pink pants).

SANTA AND FLY FISHING TRAVEL

If you'd like fly fishing travel packages to be part of your holiday season gift giving, we have an outstanding selection and gift certificates to present. From father-son type trips to couples fly fishing adventures (like Ladies Week at the famous Three Rivers Ranch in Idaho), there is a broad range of possibilities. Gifts like these have to be customized to meet your personal criteria. If you have some ideas to discuss, give a call.

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

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