



Sunset On The Rio Grande, Tierra del Fuego, Argentina



Rich Hosley (left) and Gary Martin (right), after pursuing Golden Dorado in the tropical province of Corrientes in northern Argentina, headed far south to Tierra del Fuego near the tip of South America. What a contrast – from the tropical environment of the Parana River to these wind blown flatlands just 400 miles from the Arctic Circle. The purpose: to fish the Rio Grande River for its world famous trophy sea run brown trout.

There are several quality lodges on the Rio Grande which have a loyal following of international anglers. However, none has the long standing reputation of Kau Taupen Lodge, indeed, by all measures, one of the world's finest fly fishing lodges. Kau Taupen was the choice selected by Rich and Gary. Rich compiled an excellent report for his fly fishing club's newsletter and had several photos capturing their experience. That report with his photos follows.

“After a three and one half hour flight south from Buenos Aires, we arrived in the province of Tierra del Fuego and the Rio Grande River. This province is completely separated from the rest of Argentina by the Strait of Magellan forming a large island, Isla Grande de Tierra del Fuego, which is shared with Chili.. This land was first discovered by Ferdinand Magellan in the early 1500's and named 'Land of the Smokes' resulting from the smoke of large fires which the natives built to warm themselves. Being only four hundred miles from Antarctica, the climate is much harsher and the landscape barren. It is absolutely devoid of flora with the exception of hardy grasses (river, left below). The fauna consists of wild guanaco (a llama-like animal), grey foxes, 80# grass-eating beavers, and lots of sheep.



We were met by vehicles and guides from the Kau Tapen Lodge. After a one hour drive we arrived at the lodge and the clock started on seven days which would be unlike any seven days I had ever experienced. Kau Tapen is an exclusive fishing lodge and is frequented by anglers who travel the world with their fly rods. The lodge guests were from Finland, France, Italy, United Kingdom, and the US. Outside of fishing for peacock bass in Brazil, there was little I could add to the dinner conversation when it came to fishing experiences.



All of the food was prepared from scratch in the lodge and designed to meet the expectations of European gourmet palates. The bar was open and fully stocked with spirits, wines, and aperitifs. The scotch was Chevas Regal, the gin Bombay Sapphire and so on. The wines were all from Argentina and of reserve quality. Hors d'oeuvres preceded lunch and dinner (above, left – lodge left/center). Lunch was served with soup, entrée, and a choice of five desserts. Dinner was served with soup, choice of one of three entrees, and again a choice between five desserts. The entrée presentation was as good as it gets with sauces drizzled artistically on the plate along with some vertical expression stuck in the entrée. The wine glasses were continually refilled even though many times they were still half-full. Argentina is the land of meat, so every meal featured either lamb, beef, pork, or a combination. After a couple of days I realized I couldn't continue this program and expect to have any pants that I could button for the trip home. I started leaving food on my plate, reducing my wine intake, and choosing sorbet for my dessert rather than chocolate mousse or crème brulee.

The fishing schedule - our program was breakfast at 8:00; 9:00 rendezvous with our guides; 1:30 return to the lodge; lunch at 2:00; 2:30 until 5:00 siesta; 5:30 rendezvous with the guides for our evening fishing; 10:30 return to the lodge; 11:30 dinner; 12:30 lights out. I came equipped with my Sage 9' 8wt VPS rod, a Rio Versa Tip line, a set of MOW T11 sink tips, and two poly leaders. I had prearranged to use one of the lodge's two-handed rods as well. I purchased a dozen flies from the lodge which consisted of three articulated leeches on size 6 hooks and an assortment of beadhead nymphs tied on size 10 and 12 hooks. These included the green machine, prince nymph, and various patterns of rubber legs. Our tippetts ranged from 12-16# test.



Unlike my tropical experience catching Golden Dorado up north, it was cold. Multiple layers of polar fleece, fingerless gloves, fleece hat, and a good hooded fishing jacket were essential. The low temperatures ranged from 28 to 35 degrees in the mornings to 45 to 55 degrees during our sunny days. Those were absolute temperatures and did not figure in the wind chill. And the wind, oh my goodness! You haven't lived until you stand in a river with 15" waves topped with white caps generated by constant 50mph winds blowing at right angles to the direction of your cast. Casting my 8wt single-handed rod could be compared to elk hunting with a pellet gun. I immediately switched to my reserved two-handed rod and never put it down. It was a 14'4" 9wt. Z Axis rod from Sage. Despite being at the beginning of the learning curve with my two-handed casting, I hung in there and actually had times when I thought I was doing a pretty good job. The guides were all excellent instructors and very helpful. As an aside the guides came from Ireland, Sweden, Russia, France, and Argentina. Kau Tapen has fishing rights on 220 km of river which it shares with the Maria Behety Estancia. This section of river consists of twelve beats and seventy-two pools. The guests rotated guides and beats every day. The sizes of all the fish caught were carefully measured and recorded before release. During our week twelve guests hooked one hundred sixty-four sea run brown trout and landed one hundred twenty-four. Nine were landed over 20#, the largest being a 31# monster. My largest was 20# followed by 17#, 12#, and then others ranging from 4# to 10#.

As seemed to be my luck on this trip, the river was at its lowest level in fourteen years creating problems for the returning fish to get over the bar at the mouth of the river. We worked hard for the fish we caught. While a normal average catch rate would be in the area of six to eight fish per day, we averaged slightly less than two fish per day. It was still a thrill when you hooked one of those monsters and doing so was a distinct possibility with every cast.

So what is the bottom line for this trip? Let me just say that in terms of traveling with my fly rod, this was the best experience I have had. Argentina is a wonderful country to visit and the fishing opportunities are addictive. I am currently negotiating with my wife, Janette, for a return next year. The only change I would make is to stay in a less exclusive lodge on the Rio Grande. At seventy-one years of age I thank God for the good health I enjoy and the resulting opportunities to pursue this great sport of fly fishing.” Rich Hosley

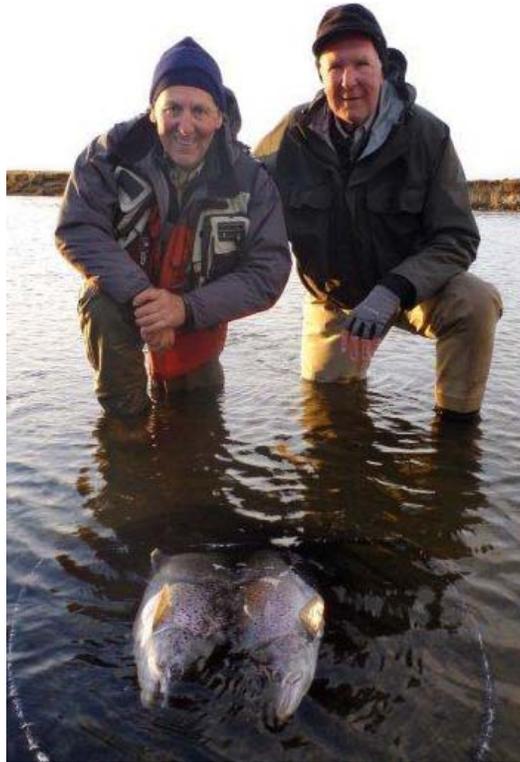


PHOTO CREDITS: Tierra del Fuego – Rich Hosley.

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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