

NEWSLETTER #38 - JULY 2005

Leland Fly Fishing Travel Newsletter – July, 2005

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This is the thirty-eighth 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. One of our services is to compare and contrast different lodges/outfitters. 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.

PERSONAL TRIP REPORT TO THE ELK RIVER, FERNIE, B.C.

Fernie, British Columbia, is located about 60 miles north of the Montana border, on the western side of the Continental Divide. The Canadian Rockies are spectacular in this area and Fernie is a world class ski destination in the winter when it's population goes from 4,000 people to over 10,000.

I've been hearing great reports from clients about both the spectacular scenery, diverse outdoor activities and the great cutthroat and bull trout fishing. It was time to check it out - so my wife, Marte, and I paid a visit in early July.

The Elk River and its tributaries supply the fishing which ranges from drift boat fishing on the main Elk to walk/wade on the many small streams that feed the main stem. It's primarily native cutthroat fishing - as good as cutthroat fishing gets. Large numbers of fat, healthy, football shaped 14 – 15 inch fish rising constantly for the dry fly, with the occasional 20+ incher. No planted fish have been introduced into the entire drainage so it's basically the way it's been since the time of Noah and his ark (or something in that range). In fact, in my book, the British Columbian government deserves gold stars for their conservation approaches. They have limited, through licensing, the number of fishing days on the Elk, even at the expense of some of the local outfitters, to preserve the fishery.

The bull trout are the large, native predators that keep the cutts in check. And they do get large. Ten pounders are not uncommon and 20 pound fish are possible....and at certain times, they can be sight fished. The bull trout is part of the char family and has been a part of the natural balance in this area for centuries.

Places to stay range from farm-style lodges to "world class" ski properties. In the summer, these ski resorts provide a very comfortable home for visiting fly fishers. We stayed at one such resort property and we agreed that it was one of the finest places we've visited in all our globe hopping. Great character, service, scenery, food, and spa treatments for a non-fishing spouse who enjoys spending a day or two relaxing away from the water.

We have a working relationship with one of the fine outfitters in the area. These are guys who grew up in Fernie and know the little nooks and crannies that hold fish. The Elk River watershed fishes well from early July through early October.

Getting there: You can fly non-stop from San Francisco to Calgary and, via rental car, make the spectacular three hour drive across the Continental Divide. Or you can connect through Salt Lake City to Kalispell in Montana – Fernie is a comfortable 2.5 hour drive from Kalispell.

This is one of those places where people return year after year....for the fishing, but also because of the ambiance of the area. Great family destination.

DESTINATION DAY AT BUSH STREET SHOP TUESDAY, JULY 26

Come in to the Bush Street shop from 11:00am through the evening to visit about exciting fly fishing destinations or share your personal fly fishing travel adventures. We'll have slide presentations available by appointment on all our destinations. There will be two scheduled presentations at 12:30 and 5:00. The subject of these two presentations, in general, will be fly fishing in the Rockies and specifically will include slides from our recent trip to Fernie, British Columbia (see above). Stop in and say "hi."

TRIP REPORTS.....AND FANTASY DAYS AND FISH

Leading off our trip reports are a some very recent reports from the Minipi River. Dave and Dan Ellis have made chasing the giant brookies of the Minipi an annual event for about a dozen years, while Don Nelson made his first trip this year. Don commented:

"The trip was great. I must have caught about 50 pike.....my largest brookie was 7.5 pounds."

From Dave Ellis: "Every year is different. The weather had been very hot for a couple of weeks before we arrived. The major hatches were advanced and were over for most of our trip. However, we did have one day with a green drake hatch that resulted in 14 brookies taken on the surface for a total weight of 74 lbs, 6 oz. Biggest fish was 7 lb, 14 oz." (Only on the Minipi do brook trout days like this happen...and on dry flies!)

From Alaska, comes a very special experience from a 36 hour trip. Jim Dufficy was in Anchorage for a business appointment and brought his son, Ian, with him to try out a weekend fly fishing adventure. We set him up with a fly out service out of Anchorage for an overnight wilderness adventure. They took a 40 minute float plane ride into a lake of about 100 acres with a tent cabin (canvas over a wood frame), cooking utensils, propane stove, and boat with outboard. They brought their own food, water, sleeping bags, and fishing equipment for an overnight adventure that turned out to be spectacular. They caught feisty 14 – 16 inch rainbows on the surface and some on streamers. Hit a dragon fly hatch that had fish coming out of the water 3 – 5 feet chasing them. Released about 100 fish in the day and a half of fishing. Adding to the overall adventure was a face-to-face encounter with a large bull moose and a giant grizzly. Jim stated that he would definitely do this again, but would bring a sidearm the next time. This was not your traditional Alaskan giant rainbow trout pursuit using one of Alaska's AAA lodges – but, in Jim's words, "...was one of those weekends that seemed to have a month's worth of experiences."

From the Rockies in the west, George Wilson was in Eastern Idaho and took a 24" and 27" rainbow on the Henry's Fork. He combined that with some great surface sight fishing for nice cutthroat on the South Fork of the Snake.

Also in the Colorado Rockies, one of our most discriminating groups of traveling fly fishermen visited one to the west's two finest fly fishing operations. These are lodges with fabulous accommodations, outstanding food, service, quality guides, and most important, miles and miles of private water teeming with trophy trout. Bob Friend reported good numbers of healthy 20+ inch fish – "on a scale of 10, this place gets an 11."

From Moose Lake Lodge in British Columbia comes this report from Dr. Ralph Strother: "...the memories will last a lifetime. Who would have believed the scenery, the accommodations, the food – let alone the fishing. 100 rainbows each (at least) on dry flies that last day and the 4 – 6 pound fish of the day before."

Debbie Mallory and hubby took their first Belize mothership trip in April. Debbie commented: "We really enjoyed the trip. Irwin caught his first tarpon on a fly. The bonefish were plentiful. Charles (captain and guide) and Avi (cook) are wonderful, hard-working people who truly made the trip the success it was. All in all, a wonderful experience and we've been talking to friends about booking another trip."

Several years ago, our first client to take a mothership trip was a West Virginia "mountain boy" named Greg Weaver. Greg has made the Belize trip an almost annual event. This year, there was a new element as he finally talked his wife into joining him...just the two of them. Greg's report: "Landed three tarpon of 50, 70 and 90 pounds, jumped maybe a dozen more, permit raced to an inch and thought about eating it, plus lots of bonefish. My first wife (and only wife) loved the entire week and company. Now there's talk of 'we gotta bring our daughters down here!'"

AUGUST, SEPTEMBER, AND OCTOBER IDEAS

While planning a last minute adventure for the late summer or early fall may be a challenge, there are still some very "live" possibilities. Salt water destinations, like Christmas Island, offer a great opportunity this time of the year. There are a few open weeks in September and October on the Belize motherships. Alaska will be hitting its prime time in late August through mid-September and there are still openings at some of the premier lodges. British Columbia and the American west offer quality experiences. If you want to explore possibilities for the "right now," give a call or stop in to the shop on Destination Day next Tuesday and let's look at slides of what may be available.

JOIN US IN NEW ZEALAND IN FEBRUARY

We still have some spots open for our stay at the world famous Lake Rotoroa Lodge on New Zealand's South Island. This is a great spot to build a New Zealand adventure around. Come join us if you don't have anything else pressing this February!

ROOM FOR TWO RODS REMAIN AT NORTH PLATTE LODGE IN SEPTEMBER

What's become our annual "Leland week" at the North Platte Lodge in Wyoming still has two spots open. The dates are Sept 4 – 8. Call for more info.

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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