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DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO A NEW ZEALAND ADVENTURE



Bernie Alper has visited NZ over a dozen times and he captures the attraction of NZ with this one sentence: “The cordiality of its citizens, the natural beauty of the countryside, the mountains and the rivers and the free flowing streams, so crystal pure and clean, where you can gaze into the water and target trout like you see in no other place in the world, that is what makes New Zealand a great destination and one that keeps drawing me back.” At left, Bernie with one of the two 10+ pound browns he released during this trip.

New Zealand may be the top destination on the globe for combining a couples trip with a truly “world class” fly fishing experience. There are so many different ways to approach assembling a New Zealand itinerary. The best approach will vary depending on the individual objectives, budget, and overall interests. In reviewing the many different types of itineraries for NZ travelers, the itineraries discussed in this newsletter represent examples of the basic approaches to touring and fishing NZ.

COUPLES WITH ONE NON-FISHING SPOUSE – TOURING WITH SOME FISHING BLENDED IN

Laura and William Owens, on their second NZ trip, and two couples traveling together (the Sikes/Otterson party) both had similar itineraries which involved about two weeks touring NZ with 5 – 6 days of scheduled guided fishing. Both took “trout of a lifetime” (Walt Sikes at right and see below for William’s ten pounder) and both had some occasional weather issues to contend with. Both used a combination of accommodations which ranged from some of NZ’s finest top end eco tour lodges to a farm stay and “do it yourself” cottage. However, there were distinct differences in the two itineraries. The Owens’ itinerary had some very high end wine country experiences included with their agenda while the Sikes/Otterson foursome made a stop in Fiji on their way home (see below).



Taylor (at left below) used the challenging fishing environment of NZ to get her first exposure to fly fishing – indeed, fishing of any kind – and, with the assistance of some super guides, was successful in releasing her first ever fly caught trout. She commented: “I had a lot of fun and will do it again.” (below, l to r – they had a special copter day in Fiordland National Park that included walking on a glacier, being dropped for a day of fishing a secluded, pristine Fiordland river, and circling Milford sound)



COUPLES WHO BOTH FISH – FISHING WITH SOME TOURING BLENDED IN

Terry and Gary Butts both are passionate fly fishers and fishing is the centerpiece of their NZ adventure; however, they also work in some touring activities and enjoy time away from the water. Gary commented on their second NZ trip, “We had a fabulous trip - better than our first trip.” The general approach for second trips is to repeat what you enjoyed most from the first trip while adding in selected new experiences, waters, and/or guides and lodges.

On a 20 day itinerary, they had three stops where they fished for three consecutive days with a select guide, nine total guided fishing days. Also included were wine country visits, a stay at a spa, and general R & R.



Above right, Gary and Terry also earn the “Cute NZ Couple” recognition for their second time with this shot. They must practice these poses!! Below, l to r, small streams in NZ often hold big surprises; lake side vineyard; there are rainbows in some waters; Gary with a nice brown.



COUPLES HARD CORE FISHING APPROACH



There are some couples, who both fish, that are not interested in any of the touring or eco-tour options New Zealand offers. They just want to get on the water, with the best possible guides, as much as possible. In our 18 years of arranging NZ itineraries, one such couple stands out – Barbara (at left with a good brown) and Charlie Renfrew. I was amazed over the years at this globe-hopping, fly fishing couple’s endurance in their pursuit of NZ’s unique fishery. While Barbara was in her mid 70’s and Charlie in his early 80’s (with a replacement hip), they would approach their fishing in the most extreme way possible, distaining a day off the water. Even on travel days, when they changed locations, they would fish a full day and then travel in the evening to be on the water the next morning in their new location with their next guide.

During the nine consecutive years they traveled to NZ (before health issues slowed them), the Renfrew’s used a profile that many NZ veterans use. The determining factor in their itinerary was getting time with the guides they enjoyed the most. They split their 2½ week trip into fishing in three general areas with their favorite four guides. To be sure they would get the guides they wanted for the times that suited their overall plan, they always planned their trips a year in advance.

“BEST” TIME TO VISIT NZ



Generally, it is accepted that mid January til the end of March produces the most settled weather. However, in NZ, weather is always a variable and far from predictable. Many NZ travelers prefer to travel in the early or late season because the waters (and the country) are less crowded. One of those anglers, who visits NZ twice a year (in both the early season and late season, Oct and Apr), is John Part. John has released more browns weighing in excess of ten pounds than anyone we know of. He writes a report on most of his NZ trips which makes interesting reading for anyone who may be interested in the early and late seasons. Here is one of his reports: [THE PART REPORT ON NZ](#)

THE ONE WEEK LODGE EXPERIENCE – AN OPTION



If you only had one week to fish and didn't want to spend time moving around a lot, a good option can be to plant yourself at one of New Zealand's world class fly fishing lodges. Some itineraries will include a 4 or 5 night stay at one of these lodges as part of the overall plan, but with fishing time limited to one week, a lodge can be a good choice for the entire time. Jim Nix spent a December week at one such lodge in NZ. Jim's wife, Vicki, had professional duties in NZ and Jim flew over to join her. He scheduled a fishing week and then they did some touring together. Vicki is good at creating her own activities, but the top lodges do provide lots of different non-

fishing activities to keep a non-fishing spouse from getting bored. Jim and Vicki got married on the South Island during a previous NZ trip (this was a marriage to warm a fly fishers heart, and, if you haven't heard the story, it is worth asking about).



Jim's report on his lodge week: "The lodge was fabulous tucked in the hills just south of Taupo, New Zealand on the North Island. I caught all rainbows; some of the other fishermen caught 24+ inch browns. It just depended on the water you fished. New Zealand fishing is all sight fishing and described by the Kiwi as being a 'bit of a trek'! Fished for 6 days, netted over 60 rainbows in the 3 to 5 pound range with the biggest tipping the scales a bit over 7 pounds."

EVOLUTION FROM A COUPLES TOURING AND FISHING TRIP TO A HARD CORE FISHING ADVENTURE

Bernie Alper (referenced in the first article and below, both featuring him holding beautiful 10# browns) gives a rendition of an evolution that often occurs with long time NZ fly fishers....."This coming year will be my 12th year of travel to New Zealand. My first 5 years I was accompanied by my wife and while we fished, we also toured for approximately 50% of the time mixing lodges when fishing with hotels when touring. After my wife decided that she enjoyed the predictable warmth and sunshine of Tucson, Arizona during the winter months, I was left with the most difficult task of having to spend 3 weeks each year fishing New Zealand on my own. During the past 6 years I've pretty much fished with independent guides. Outside of travel days and giving myself a day to rest when I arrive in New Zealand, I devote my days exclusively to fishing."

KEYSTONE COPS VISIT NEW ZEALAND



All of us who travel with our fly rods have had first day preparation issues. You're in a new location, far from home, and have just unpacked your clothing and fishing gear. You're rushing to get prepared to meet your guide and it always takes longer than you expected to get everything sorted out and ready to go. Well, Gary Butts relayed a very funny story about their first day in NZ this year....."The first day was like the keystone cops – in the rush to get ready to meet our guide, I rigged her 3 wt instead of her 4 wt and equipped it with a 5 wt line. I mistakenly put on one of her boots and she had one of mine."

Their fishing day turned out to be a very special, classic NZ day, but with some unexpected situations....."Terry hooked and landed a 8.5# brown (at left) on her 3 wt rod. My notes indicated we landed 11 fish, most were over 6#. About half were on dry

flies. Terry's 8 1/2 lb was taken on a dry. We had a wonderful day, but due to the wrong boots, both of us had terrible leg cramps at the end of the day."

THE 10+ POUND BROWN



A brown or rainbow of over ten pounds, taken while sight fishing NZ's crystalline waters, is one of flyfishing's most memorable accomplishments. Each year, we have one or two taken by clients, but this year was special. And it wasn't because of some special "once in a lifetime mouse year." William Owens (at right) took his 10+ pound brown from a relatively small stream, a river you wouldn't hear about if you read every book



about "where to fish in NZ." Three of the 10+ pound fish pictured in this newsletter were taken while fishing with the same guide in that same small piece of water. This particular guide has always had a knack for finding big fish in small waters.....and getting them to eat. This year was exceptional, even by his standards. There was a time when the ten pound plus fish was more common in NZ, but the possibility to take one of these "fish of a lifetime" still exists.

THE FIJI AND AUSTRALIA CONNECTION

Dual environment trips, which take place in the same general area of the globe, provide an excellent overall experience. They maximize the value and time of air travel. If you are in the South Pacific on a NZ trip, there are excellent tie-ins with spots in Australia and Fiji. For the last 16 years, we have been using both Fiji and Australia to combine a tropical experience with the joys of a NZ visit.....indeed, two distinctly different environments. Dual environment trips, such as this, present their own packing challenges. If you have the time, desire, and budget, there are many tropical options you can tie to a New Zealand adventure.

WHAT WE DO AT FLY FISHING ADVENTURES

This is a link with a description of who we are and what we do.....also, listing the destinations around the world that we can provide reliable information regarding the experience and how to prepare for your visit:

[Fly Fishing Adventures - About What We Do](#)

PHOTO CREDITS: (top to bottom) top 10+ pound brown – Bernie Alper; Couples w/non-fishing.....Walt Sikes and Taylor Bennett; Fishing with some touring.....Terry and Gary Butts; Couples.....most fishing...Barbara and Charlie Renfrew;one week lodge.....Jim Nix; Keystone Cops – Terry Butts; 10+ Pound Column – Bernie Alper, William Owens, Kevin Payne.

An enthusiastic traveling fly fisherman,
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