

NEWSLETTER #45A - NEW ZEALAND SPECIAL 2006

Hi Everyone With An Interest In New Zealand,

This e-mail includes some updated information for New Zealand "fly rod touring" for '07. Also, some of our recent trip highlights.

We recently returned from our annual New Zealand trek (with another stop in Fiji) -some things stay the same and some new things are uncovered.

BEST RESULTS – MOST "FANTASY DAYS"

A "fantasy fly fishing day" in NZ is unlike anything in the world. Our February newsletter detailed Jim Taylor's terrific day – in fact, you could almost count Jim's entire trip as a fantasy. On the day referenced, Jim had with 13 fish from 4 to 7.5 pounds, all on DRY flies, and was on a copter fly out from Lake Rotoroa Lodge. For five years, we have been tracking carefully where our clients (and myself) have had "fantasy days" and Lake Rotoroa Lodge leads our accounting with six of the top 10 days (Independent guide, Kevin Payne, has three of the top 10 and Lake Brunner Lodge the 10th).

While Lake Rotoroa Lodge is a wonderful "high end" stay with great food, top guides, and a very detailed approach to planning each fishing day, the downsides are the sand flies can be a nuisance and the copter fly outs are expensive.

THE DOUBLE DIGIT FISH

The 10+ pound trout is a rare commodity; however, in New Zealand the odds of getting a monster, maybe even on a DRY fly, are better than anywhere on the globe. There is a strong rumor floating that David Sheldon (who is still in Kiwi-land on his first New Zealand trip) has recorded this rare feat. I haven't spoken to David so don't have the details. I do know it came from the early part of his itinerary so my best guess is out of the Motu River, Murphy's Lodge. I fished the Motu for the first time from Murphy's on this years trip and there are certainly lots of big fish in the Motu.

Although not common, the ten pound trout caught sight fishing in New Zealand's crystal clear waters is the ultimate prize for a fresh water fly caster. Our five years of assembling New Zealand itineraries has produced one or two such fish per year. Places like Poronui Ranch, Lake Rotoroa Lodge, Guide Nigel Birt, and Guide Kevin Payne have been involved in those big fish being taken.

KEVIN PAYNE EXCLUSIVE

We think Independent Guide Kevin Payne and the waters he accesses represent some of New Zealand's best fishing without using a helicopter. Also, Kevin brings a work ethic and energy to the day that is special. Those feelings are supported by the experiences of a lot of fishing days by a lot of different fisherman over the last five years. In 2006, we sent Kevin the greatest number of his clients. Virtually all of those clients are returning in 2007 along with some repeaters from 2005. Because of that, Kevin's booking coordinator (his wife Jodi) has given us the "first rights" on the key prime time dates of late January, February, and March. Those "first rights" expire in March. Currently, we are trying to allocate days with Kevin to include everyone with an interest. We may need a lottery!!

WINERY TOURS, FLY FISH COMBO DAY IN HAWKES BAY, NAPIER AREA

My wife and I combined some unique elements into one day during our visit to the Hawkes Bay, Napier area of the North Island on our recent trip. The day started with a visit to a coastal river that is stronger on numbers of fish than size where we took 20+ fish in the morning. Lunkers these weren't (12 to 20 inch fish with two 20 inchers the top fish), but they were plentiful and the action fast. We had lunch streamside then changed into the casual clothes we had brought along and spent the afternoon visiting wineries in the area, one of NZ's finest wine producing regions.

For unique experiences unrelated to fly fishing, we also made a stop in New Zealand's capital city of Wellington to attend the final day of the International Rugby Seven's Tournament. We don't know much about rugby, but we both agreed this was the greatest sporting spectacle we had ever witnessed. We had watched the finals of this special event on TV during two of our previous NZ trips and had decided we had to be there – we weren't disappointed.

New Zealand itineraries have become one of our major specialties. Personally, I enjoy matching the many options of New Zealand with the personal interests and objectives of clients. New Zealand is unique in all the world for these reasons:

- Sight fishing for trout in crystalline streams and rivers where the fish can average a legitimate three to four pounds or even bigger in some waters.
- Quality and industriousness of the Kiwi people overall, and specifically, the globe's most outstanding group of guides.
- The wonderful variety of inns, lodges, and country stays; from farm stays to some of the top properties my wife and I have ever visited in all our world wide travels.
- The country itself from the dramatic alps of the South Island to the spectacular coastlines, rich farmlands and vineyards, and the spectacular waters of it's rivers and streams.

We have a New Zealand slide tour available where we take a map of the two islands and start on the North Island moving south viewing the many different waters, guides, lodges, and options. If you are located in the San Francisco Bay Area and would like to get together and view this "tour," just let me know.

If you have traveled to New Zealand for a "fly rod tour," you know the importance of early planning to have the best options available to you. Both the top independent guides and best lodges book up very early for the prime late January through March dates.

An enthusiastic traveling fly fisher,

Don Muelrath
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