



The Golden Dorado is an aggressive, aerobic, toothy, attacking predator that is a great fly rod adversary.....with its golden hues, it is a spectacularly beautiful finned creature. They are a tropical fresh water fish found in a narrow latitudinal band that covers northern Argentina and parts of the neighboring countries of Uruguay and Bolivia. The Bolivia fishery has a season of June through September and for the sake of our timing, didn't fit into our South American itinerary. Our focus was in finding a Golden Dorado fishery in northern Argentina with a "prime time" that would fit in with the timing of the other aspects of our Argentina trip (those other aspects included the giant rainbows of Jurassic Lake, Patagonia trout on the eastern side of the Andes, and the sea run browns of Tierra del Fuego).

The northern province of Corrientes contains Argentina's top Golden Dorado destinations. A long time favorite of many anglers is Pira Lodge, located a four hour drive from the Corrientes airport, in the extensive 3,500,000 acre Ibera Marshlands. This is a comfortable experience (considering we're talking remote and tropical) in these fascinating wetlands with the additional attraction of its own unique brand of wildlife. While this is a strong Golden Dorado fishery, fish over 15 pounds are very rare with double digit fish uncommon. We opted for the fishery on the High Parana River (a two hour drive from the airport) because we knew from previous client experiences that larger fish were available, even if we had to work hard for them. We did release 13 double digit fish with 4 of them over sixteen pounds. We saw fish that would have gone twenty pounds and more, but either couldn't get them to eat or couldn't hold onto them.

Below l to r: Rich Hosley with large golden, Frank Jackson with a Paku, and Jeff Reinke with a trophy golden.



Our guides each operated a skiff with a 40 to 60hp outboard and electric trolling motor for controlling the boat while drifting a shoreline and casting to log jams, rocks, and other structure (only used floating lines). Each skiff had casting platforms fore and aft for two anglers. Protection from the tropical sun comes in many forms: Rich (in blue) and Gary Martin (gray and displaying one his effective ties) show their version of sun block.



LIQUID GOLD

The gill plates of a fish often hold brilliant, if subtle, colors. With the Golden Dorado, those brilliant colors can sometimes resemble liquid gold (below). At left, Josh Luft-Glidden with a golden worth remembering and Frank on the right with something to smile about. Lots of great aerial photo opps.



PIRA PITA

Some alternate species from the Parana that are great sport fish in their own right are the dark brown Paku (above) and the Pira Pita. The Paku is shapped like a permit and has some other similarities as well. The silver Pira Pita (below with Jeff on left and Rich on right) is more common than its cousin, the gold Pira Pita (no photo). Gary is the masked bandit at left showing off a good use of his fly from above. Josh casts to the brushy shoreline at sunset.



SUPER GRAND SLAM

Maybe the single most spectacular day of our week belonged to Jay Strako (below center) who had several goldens (including a 16 pounder) along with the three other species that comprise the Parana Super Grand Slam – the Paku (below) and, not pictured, a silver and gold Pira Pita.



THE DELIBERATE RISERS – A DRY FLY EXPERIENCE

One afternoon, I picked up my lighter rod to try my hand at what the guides had told me was a fun fly rod experience – casting a floating fruit fly and drifting it under the trees leaning over the waters edges. The fly was tied with deer hair and trimmed to imitate the shape of a small green fruit that often falls in the water and is a favorite food of both the Paku and Pira Pita. For a few hours, I drifted that fruit fly, had six eats, three fish hooked up and two released at the boat – the silver Pira Pita at left below and the Paku (l/c). Since the waters were pretty clear, I could see the fish approach, approach, approach and approach ever so slowly.....and then very deliberately, eat the fly. Since they were eating an inanimate object, there was no rush and it was difficult to watch, wait, wait, and wait without striking too soon. Those two fish coupled with some goldens taken that day gave me a Parana River Grand Slam, two thirds of the ‘slam on a dry fly. Additionally, the Paku and Pira Pita are very tough for a fish in the four to six pound class (they do get larger, but not the ones I took, although I did have a pair of 12 pound Paku carefully examine my fly, permit like). If I wasn't so pre-occupied with trying to get one

of those monster Golden Dorado, I would have spent a lot more time fishing that floating fruit fly.....it was a memorable fly rod experience. Right, a golden walks on his tail.



BEGINNING AND END – NO MIDDLE?

Starting our week off fast the first two days were Jeff (on left) and Jay (l/c below) who took multiple double digit fish including some of the largest fish of the week. The middle of our week was very tough fishing, not that we didn't keep up the intensity of our continuous casting efforts. The fish just weren't there.....or weren't eating. The possible reasons for the slow down could have been the bright full moon in a cloudless sky, or more likely, the water level dropping. Water levels are controlled by an upriver dam, the largest hydro-electric plant in the world. Personally, I've experienced too many great fishing days following a full moon to commit fully to the "full moon bandwagon" – however, there was something happening those two days because the number of eats dropped off significantly. Josh (r/c below) and Frank (taking a beer break in the shade at right) provided the biggest golden highlights to wrap up our week. Josh took his big fish and a few other nice ones, and, on our last evening, Frank had the most spectacular, frantic hour of the week releasing six fish - 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12 pounds.

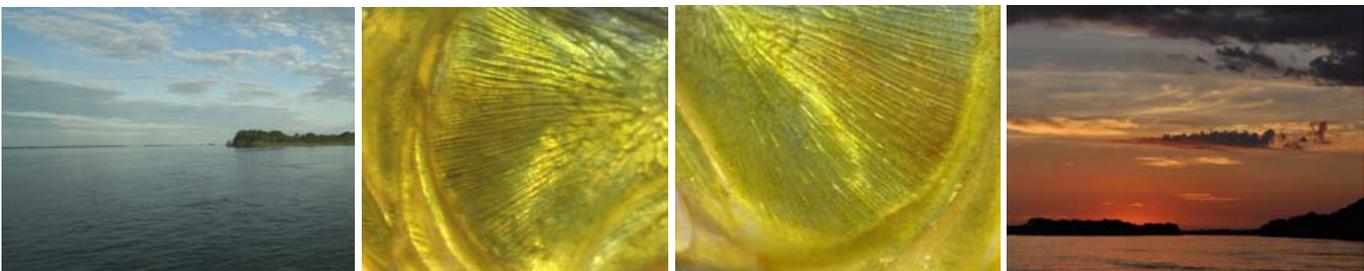


THE LODGE

The lodge was a fairly basic tropical set up.....functional. It did provide single rooms for most everyone, something not often encountered. On left below, is the "club house" with kitchen, dinner table, lounge, the well stocked coolers, pool table and deck. R/C are some of the rooms. The group, left to right: Josh, Frank, Gary, Jay, Jeff, me, and hiding in the back, Rich. My wife, Marte, is taking the photo.



THE PARANA RIVER



The Parana is the second largest river in South America, next to the Amazon. The photo at left above shows the river. In many places, it appeared to be a lake, looking similar to the way Amazon appears. The fishing takes place, for the most part, on the edges and in channels where the current is most noticeable and the structure is obvious. For a jungle river, the Parana maintained a high degree of clarity due to it being a tailwater. You could often see the fish coming to attack your streamer.

It was satisfying to see that, two years ago, the local authorities put some conservation measures in place limiting the killing of fish to protect their unique Golden Dorado fishery.

PHOTO CREDITS: everyone in our group contributed photos to this photo essay.

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

An enthusiastic traveling fly fisherman,

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