

ARGENTINE FLOAT TRIP - PAT PATTERSON

Don,

Our whole trip was terrific, and thanks for your efforts in setting it all up.

After our successful experience at the Rio Negro in the Amazon, we went to Esquel where we met Juancho and Mike and (blanking on his name). Had a nice stay at the hotel (definitely not the Four Seasons, more like a stay at the old Tahoe Tavern. Super 8 bedrooms with a very comfortable main lodge). We were able to get them to give us two rooms rather than stay together in one two-single room. Food was adequate but certainly not as good as we had elsewhere on the trip. The first day of fishing in the Parque was just OK; Mark didn't score anything of size and I only caught one 19 incher, fishing about three hours.

The next day we fished the Rivadavia, as beautiful a river as you will ever see. My fishing was OK to good as Juancho was disappointed at the slowness. But that is a float not to be missed.

Things changed very quickly when we got to the Chubut for our float trip. In short, the Chubut offered the very best fishing experience that I have enjoyed all things considered. Seriously now, while we didn't count, I believe we each hooked about 200 fish per day on the three days. Perhaps 30% were eight inches or less, 60% 11 to 15" and 10% between 16 and 22". Everything was on dries with the hot fly being the Fat Albert.

The fish were everywhere they should have been and too often (with the small ones) getting in the way of a presentation to what we knew to be larger trout. Plenty of rising fish to cast to, but going by fairly rapidly in a pontoon boat (we were moving fast because we did a four day trip in three) you just don't have time to really work all the likely areas. The camping was exceptional as was the overall beauty of the river and the area. We were pampered nicely!

We finished the southern Patagonia portion with a stay at Estancia Esquel. Frederico, the owner, was quite gracious, and while the accommodations were Super 8 in quality, and while we had to share a room one of the nights, the experience at the Estancia was terrific, particularly the Asado.

The fishing was really exceptional. All the trout were big and fat, 15 to 22" with most in the 15 to 16 range. Very aggressive but also relatively selective. The wind was impossible when it blew, but Mark mastered it with ease (I did not) and out fished me at least 2 to 1. I suspect (we don't count) that we landed over twenty fish per day. The conditions were fantastic! Probably a better fishing river than the Chubut due to the quality of the fish and the challenge of the conditions.

Mark left on the 20th a happy man! I moved on to Arroyo Verde where I met my son, Glen. Arroyo Verde is a true gem, one of the top half a dozen scenery experiences that I have had in my life which, as you know, includes all but six or seven states and 88 countries. It is simply country not to be believed. The accommodations were as first class as you could expect, and the food was worthy of the French Laundry.

The proprietress, Meme, is a great, great Lady of the old style, class dripping from every pore but as gracious as you could imagine. It was a good thing as the fishing absolutely stunk. In five days, I landed one fish over 16" and hooked not more than three or four more. (An unlimited number of four to five inchers, however.)

It seems as if this has been an exceptionally dry and slow year with no one doing well all year. Our guide, Gabriel, says that we expects four to five good fish per day under normal conditions, and given our experience in the south, this simply didn't cut it. Of course, Arroyo Verde can produce 36" browns in double digit weights, but we didn't see any of those although we did at least SEE some big fish. But the experience of the rest of the place more than made up for the lousy fishing. The water was breathtaking, so enticing to fish.

So, Don, overall a fantastic trip. It wasn't without its hitches and things that could be improved, but all things considered, a great, great success. Thanks for your help!!

Pat Patterson

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