



ANDROS ISLAND (TAR|DEC.2018): SETH FIELDS

DATELINE: ITALY

News Analysis

This Fishing Trip Was a Real Spouse-Pleaser



Editor Emeritus Don Causey filed this report on a fishing trip that is

guaranteed to win you points with your spouse whether he or she fishes or not.

Over the many years that I edited *The Angling Report* it became clear to me that anglers who can afford to travel would do a whole lot more traveling to fish if they could find some way to involve immediate family members in at least some of their trips. Think about it. Over the years how many spouses have you met in fishing lodges? How many children? More to the point, how many times did you take your own spouse with you to a fishing lodge? I know. . .

Some anglers who travel have spouses who fish, but I am not talking about those lucky few. I'm talking about the typical fishing nut who has amassed an enormous deficit of

"Honey Do's" over the years by going on one fishing trip after another either alone or with a buddy or two in tow.

I happen to be one those outliers who thinks this problem is about to get resolved on its own by the emergence of vacation rental services such as VRBO and restive guides who are tired of being wage slaves when they provide the most important ingredient in a successful fishing trip, namely, local insight into where and how to catch fish. The ability for anglers themselves to create more flexible, spouse- and family-friendly fishing trips in some areas is on the horizon, in my view. The agents who see this opportunity first and position themselves as facilitators will make a killing. I will have more to say about this in a future issue.

In the meantime, I'm delighted to tell you there is a fishing-trip-planning service in Europe that is already facilitating wonderfully spouse-friendly trips in Italy. Actually, I have written about this service in these pages before. The difference this time is I used the service myself and I can't get over what a rich, wonderful experience it provided.

Longtime subscribers already know this trip planning service is provided by Claudio Tagini, an Italian fly fisherman and entrepreneur who lived and worked in the United States for many years before moving back home, where he lives with his American wife, Naomi, in the countryside south of Venice. A gourmand, bon vivant and history buff, Claudio has made a business out of preparing elaborate itineraries for

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Americans who want to fish in Italy as part of a larger cultural experience or as a fishing-only trip. Claudio has also helped countless Europeans enjoy fishing experiences in the United States (mostly out West), but that is another story entirely. I mention that part of his service only to make the point that Claudio understands American fly fishing as well as European fly fishing and the participants in both activities.

Claudio gave me the go-ahead to upload the itinerary he prepared for me and my wife; you can access this itinerary at theanglingreport.com. (Trigger warning! Do not let your spouse see this report unless you are prepared to be hounded mercilessly until you take her on a similar journey.) The first thing you will note about the report, I'm sure, is the length of the thing. It runs 48 pages, all of them lavishly illustrated with paintings, photographs, maps, train schedules, and more. The sometimes droll and always interesting text was custom-written for my wife and me based upon the parameters of the trip we said we wanted. Hint: it was light on fishing and heavy on spouse pleasing.

In retrospect, the cities we selected to visit and the order in which we wanted to visit them made little sense, and Claudio warned us of that before he went to work on our itinerary, which called for our arriving in Milan, stopping there for two days, then riding the train clear across the country to Pesaro, south of Venice, where Claudio and his wife have created a sort of country estate cum bed and breakfast that is nothing short of extraordinary. They call it Villa Fiori. It has olive trees, flowers of all sorts, and a view of rolling countryside that changes constantly in mood and appearance in synch with shifting patterns of light and shadow that play out each day as the sun rises and moves toward the opposite horizon. If you ask Claudio to prepare an itinerary for you, try to include a stay at Villa Fiori. We spent three days there ourselves, visiting nearby towns, enjoying Claudio's cooking, and seriously depleting the local inventory

of wine.

After that, we were off to Venice for three days, where, to our dismay, we learned the gondoliers nowadays prefer to talk on cell phones instead of sing. After that, we headed back west to Vicenza, a city I was drawn back to because I spent two and half years of my youth there as an American soldier. Who knows where the impulse to revisit places comes from later in life, but I have heard it likened to the habit old dogs have of circling before they lie down. Watch old dogs. They really do that.

From Vicenza, we headed north to Treviso and from there to Pieve di Cadore, near the famous ski resort Cortina d' Ampezzo. It was in Pieve di Cadore that I finally went fishing. My guide was Angelo Piller, who operates Villa Marinotti, the lodge where my wife and I stayed. Angelo is a guide of considerable renown in Italy, and it is easy to see why. He is an enthusiastic and wonderfully supportive guide who was ready to fish with me until dark if I wanted. Satisfied with more than a half dozen trout, I was the one who cut the day short, not he.

My fondest memory of that day was enjoying what Angelo and I called a bovine symphony performed by a herd of some 25 cows all wearing bells of different sizes and shapes. The clang and clatter were amazing, and so was the sight of the Dolomites etched against a deep blue sky. The moment pointed up the essence of a fishing trip in Italy. It is not what you catch when you fish in Italy. It is where you fish and who you fish with. I will forever remember that day with Angelo as a high point of my lifetime of fishing.

By dwelling on the context of the fishing in Italy instead of the fishing itself, I do not mean to underestimate what is available in Italy. Depending on the season, Angelo and his associate guides in Pieve di Cadore can take you in search of small brown and brook trout like those we fished for, or marble trout, which are indigenous here up to 24 inches in length. He can also put you on world-class pike at certain times of



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year. Back in the low country, Claudio introduced me to a guide who can put you on exceptional bluefin tuna during certain fall months. Fishing for that species would fit well with a stay at Casa di Fiori with Claudio and Naomi. Elsewhere across the length and breadth of northern Italy (and neighboring nations such as Slovenia, too), Claudio knows scores of places to fish and guides to help you connect.

All that said, it is still not what you catch in Italy and many other parts of Europe that really matters. It is the rich context in which you fish. I am enormously grateful to Claudio Tagini for the itinerary he created for my wife and me, and for the hospitality and friendship of his wife, Naomi. My

wife was so happy with trip, I should note, that she has given me the nod for a month-long stay in Louisiana chasing redfish. Need I say more?

Just be aware that Claudio



does not take commissions from the providers he recommends. That is a real plus, if you think about it. Instead, he charges his clients a

fee for sharing what he knows and creating for them a custom itinerary chock-full of suggestions on cultural opportunities and traditional tourism tips, along with hard-core fishing information. If you reach out to him, it will be up to you how much cultural versus fishing information he puts into your itinerary. I can personally attest to the fact that he is an expert in both areas. Be certain you discuss his fee early on to avoid a misunderstanding. Enjoy!—*Don Causey*.

Postscript: You can read a copy of the itinerary Claudio created for my wife and me on *The Angling Report* website at: <https://www.anglingreport.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Don-Causey-Italy-Itinerary-Sample.pdf>.

DATELINE: MONTANA

Subscriber Report A New Outfitter for Northwest Montana



Editor Note: Subscriber Richard Hertz recently shared with us the brief details of a trip he took to fish with Kootenai Canyon Anglers in northwestern Montana. The trip was a success by all accounts, and the ability to fish in such a beautiful location while catching what Hertz describes as uncommonly strong trout, will no doubt have many anglers itching to try it for themselves.

In the interest of full disclosure I must give you a little background about my relationship with Rita Adams, who with her partner, Johnny Pares, owns Kootenai Canyon Anglers.

In August 2000, I was a novice fly fisherman and had recently moved to Santa Fe, New Mexico. A friend, a very experienced fly fisherman, invited me to the Costilla River in the Valle Vidal for a day of fishing with his favorite guide, Ed Adams of Questa, New Mexico, who would bring along another guide for me. It turned out to be Ed's 20-year-old daughter Rita, who was a child prodigy of the fly-fishing world. Essentially, Rita and Ed taught me the basics of fly fishing over many years in New Mexico, and also during four trips to the first-class Casa Blanca Lodge on Ascension Bay in the Yucatán, which was managed by Rita and Johnny for seven years.

When Ed told me that Rita and Johnny were relocating to northwest Montana to open an outfitting and guide service based on the Kootenai River, I knew that would be my next fishing trip. My first task was to find out where and what the Kootenai was. After looking up at least five *Angling Report* articles, I found it is a great river flowing out of British Columbia into the virtually unsettled northwest corner of Montana and forming Lake Kooicanusa, a reservoir out of which flows the Kootenai across northwest Montana, into Idaho, and back to Canada.

In early August, Ed and I flew from Santa Fe to Kalispell, Montana, by way

of Denver. We rented a car and drove an hour and a half through virtually uninhabited beautiful forest to Troy, Montana (pop. 890), where we met Rita, who showed us to an Airbnb rental cabin on Lake Creek that Kootenai Canyon Anglers (KCA) had arranged for us. It was a very comfortable cabin, totally equipped with everything one might want, and was about 20 minutes from Troy, which was our meeting point each morning.

KCA is currently in the development phase of its client lodging and hopes to be up and running by June 2019. In the meantime, they have a number of rentals in the Troy and Bonners Ferry, Idaho, areas to provide lodging for their clients. They provide full concierge-reservation service from flights to food. Privately catered meal service is available if you are pooped from fighting the incredible Kootenai fish and want to just relax after fishing. A convenient, excellent market is available in Troy as well. We enjoyed throwing some food on the grill each night with the exception of a fun, down-home evening at the Silver Spur, a local watering hole.

We fished a different section of the river each day, floating in KCA's 16-foot Clackacraft drift boats. The first day, we fished a section from Libby

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Dam to Osprey Landing near Libby, Montana. The weather was hotter than it should have been, but this was typical of the entire northwest. All three days, we fished Orvis Helios and Scott S4 rods in 5- and 6-weights. When I was told most fish were in the 12- to 17-inch range, I asked for a 4-weight and was persuaded to stick with the stronger weights. Once again, I learned to listen to the pros.

Each day we fished small dries like caddis and PMD mayflies with 4X and 5X monofilament in the early morning, and switched to big hopper-type dries for the rest of the day. I knew this trip would be special when my first fish in the boat was a 16-inch bull trout, my first ever. I have never struggled so hard to land a 16-inch fish on a 6-weight rod before. These Kootenai fish are incredibly strong for their size due to the swift, deep currents they reside in year-round. Overall, the first day's fishing was fair in fish landed, but good in contacts. Not bad for a not-too-experienced dry-fly fisherman.

The second day was the highlight

of the trip. We fished from Leonia on the Montana border to Moyie Springs in Idaho. This is as beautiful and unspoiled a stretch of river as one can imagine. In an entire day, the only other "traffic" was two ladies in rubber rafts floating down the river. At this moment, KCA is one of only a few outfitters licensed to fish this stretch in Idaho and the only one who goes out with any regularity.



It is one of those more or less unknown spots we fly fishers dream about.

The dry fly fishing was awesome. We pretty continuously hooked Columbia River redband (rainbow), West Slope cutthroat, and bull trout up to 17 inches on 6-weights. Once again, I emphasize that one should not be fooled by the size of the fish. These fish are powerful. I generally fish 5- or 4-weight rods for trout, even for fish over 20

inches, but I am not sure I could land a Kootenai 17-incher on those rods.

The third day, we floated from Troy to the Yaak River confluence, this time with Rita as our rower and guide. We had another wonderful, yet exhausting day of dry fly fishing. We stayed over that night and drove back to Kalispell in the morning.

Having experienced firsthand the excellent operation and hospitality (and fishing) Rita and Johnny provided at Casa Blanca for many years, I predict that soon you will not get a quizzical look from devoted fly fishers when you reference the "Kootenai."

We estimate the three-day, four-night trip cost at \$2,725, not including airfare and car rental. I might add that one can also fly to Spokane, Washington, and have about a three-hour drive to Troy, or fly privately into Libby, Montana, or Bonners Ferry, Idaho, and drive 30 minutes to Troy.

More info about Kootenai Canyon Anglers can be found by calling 575-214-1532 and 406-291-3261; or emailing them at info@kcanglers.com.

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Type B

“There are basically two types of people. People who accomplish things, and people who claim to have accomplished things. The first group is less crowded.” —Mark Twain

There are two types of anglers: The planners, and the non-planners.

The planners have it all figured out. They're your typical type A people. Though likely harboring varying degrees of neuroticism, they're a good companion to have on a fishing trip. Forgot your tippet? They've got it. Nippers? They've got a spare. Can't find that box of flies that you swear you packed? It's okay, they have more fly boxes than most people have flies.

As for the type B, or non-planners, well, what they lack in supplies and thoroughness, they more than make up for with camaraderie and infectious optimism. They're just along for the ride, and that's fine too. The world needs dreamers—or so I'm told.

I used to think I was a planner, but I've come to realize that my strengths lie somewhere in the middle. Not quite a ne'er-do-well, but not as diligent of a planner as I aspire to be either. I plan alright, but the plan rarely goes accordingly. For instance, I spent countless hours before my bonefish trip hovering over a screen, maneuvering through endless barrages of Google Map zoom-ins and -outs, studying past reports on bonefishing, and checking weather updates, but did I bring sunblock? Nope.

Forceps? Check.

Rods, reels? Check, Check.

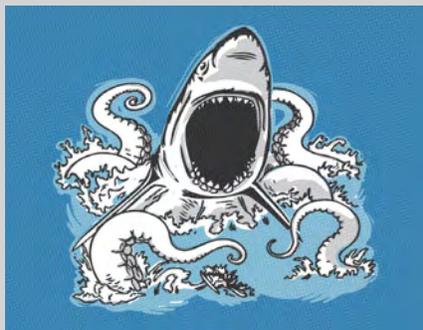
I researched the history of the island and learned what I could about it's early days when bonefishing was still being pioneered by folks like Andros Island Bonefish Club's owner, Rupert Leadon, with the help of anglers such as Lefty Kreh, Billy Pate, and George Hommel, but did I tie enough flies for the trip? Not even close.

Wire leader? Nope. No barracuda

or lemon sharks for me.

Sandals? No. Guess I'll go barefoot.

At one point, I even found myself falling deep down a rabbit hole of mysterious tales, conspiracies, and local folklore about the island. It all started with stories of a prehensile-tailed, owl-like elf creature called the chickcharney. A known trickster, chickcharnies can bestow a lifetime of luck and happiness upon those that encounter them, or they might turn one's head backwards. The difference is in whether or not you are gracious to them.



Maybe you have heard of the legendary ship-wrecking, half-octopus, half-shark creature called the lusca. Well, rumors say the lusca also calls Andros home, but it brings only swift blows, wreckage, and death to those unfortunate enough to voyage over its watery lair. It is said that the dozens of blue holes dotting the landscape of Andros are where it lives, a fact made creepier still by the notion that all of these holes, whether on land or at sea, are essentially connected like a great big spongy, labyrinth.

While on a tour of the island, I found myself standing on a rocky precipice overlooking the gaping mouth of one of these blue holes, and as I peered down at its funneling

false bottom disappearing into the depths of imagination, suddenly the notion of the lusca didn't seem quite as absurd as it had before. The whole concept was made slightly more menacing when I considered that the island's location was within the Bermuda Triangle.

Then there are the conspiracies. Rumors circulate about underwater experiments carried out by the local US Navy base (the Atlantic Undersea Test and Evaluation Center, or AUTEK) that ranged from spyware and weapons development to machines that could manipulate time. You name it, I read about it. But, did I pack enough underwear? OK, that I did do. I've learned the hard way that an abundance of clean, dry underwear is a luxury I dare not live without.

Let's not forget about the other mystery of Andros: the bonefish. There is still a lot we don't know about these ghosts of the flats. In some ways, we know less about bonefish than we do any other fly rod-worthy saltwater gamefish. Their migration habits are still mostly a mystery, but luckily it seems new information comes to light every year thanks to folks like Bonefish & Tarpon Trust and the Bahamas Conservation Trust. As far as what makes one eat a fly versus another, or what makes one hooked bonefish head for the mangroves while the others head for open water, well, that we may never understand.

But, maybe the greatest mystery on all of Andros is its people. Life on the island means dependence on the outside world for many everyday items, and independence for everything else. Even while we were there, the shipments for convenience store items hadn't come in weeks due to an engine failure on the weekly

ship. Being so cut off from the world means that many of the people that grow up on Andros eventually leave for islands with more opportunities and modern comforts. The population on the island has actually dropped in the last 20 years. Yet, there they are: farmers, handymen, basket weavers, sponge collectors, fabric makers, fishermen, cooks, and captains, all making a go at life on an island of mysteries. They are some of the most genuine and friendly people I have met in my life. Perhaps they have learned the key to happiness from the chickcharney. Maybe some

stay rather than chance coming face to face with the creature that lurks beneath the blue, or maybe it's just home.

Maybe the conspiracies and tales are rooted in truth. Who knows what secrets such a wild and exotic landscape holds. The type B part of me hopes the legends are true, but the type A in me knows that they aren't. Though I didn't see any signs of nuclear submarines, UFOs, or other government experiments, I can't help but feel like my time on Andros passed by at an unusual pace. I arrived Tuesday and in the blink of

an eye it was Saturday. It would seem like a great prank, or that the whole thing never happened were it not for the countless pictures and videos that proved that I truly had spent five days there. Could it be the result of some underwater, government time machine? Or, was it just too much fun to last? I guess I'll never know.

Type B says that next time I should take a stopwatch to monitor for inconsistencies, and type A says I should plan a longer trip. As for which part I should listen to, I'm not sure, all I know is that next time I hope the type A packs my bag.

• OUTFITTER CRITIQUES •

The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

This section of The Angling Report is based entirely on subscriber-written Fishing Trip Report Forms. Our policy on these forms is to publish excerpts in the newsletter of Angler Network Forms as received, without censorship. Agents, guides, lodge operators, and/or outfitters who disagree with any comments in this section are free to submit a rebuttal. As a subscriber, you can help extend the reach of this program by filing a Fishing Trip Report Form yourself. You will find one online at www.anglingreport.com, and clicking on File a Trip Report.

■ *Editor Note: I recently had the opportunity to fish Andros Island with my friend and editor of Gray's Sporting Journal, Russ Lumpkin. While Russ had fished for bonefish at least once before, for me it was a new experience and a chance to scratch a new species from my bucket list.*

The experience was an unforgettable one, and though I was not quite sure what to expect, in three days of fishing we both managed to bring several bonefish to hand—though, if you factored in the thousands we didn't catch, it's a pretty poor batting record, I must say. More unexpected than the fishing and the strength of the bonefish, however, was the feeling that, in the end, I felt connected to our hosts and the lodge. In a matter of days, it had become a sort of home away from home. A place I felt tied to, and that I know I will visit again.

Perhaps one of the most overlooked, yet important factors for anglers to consider when booking

a trip should be the quality of a lodge's authenticity. More specifically, is the lodge you are interested in just a lodge, or does it support the local culture and live in harmony with its surroundings? Is it a business that just sells a nice retreat or one that offers you an experience of something genuine and memorable? Any outfit can simply allow access to the local natural resources and provide amenities, but some places are much more than that. Some are a true product of their environment.

That is not to say that a lodge owned by foreigners or one defined by luxury cannot meet this criterion, but it has to be infused into the very DNA of the lodge and its ownership. For example, operations like Nomadic Waters (See Fred Miller's report in this issue), which runs out of the Brazilian Amazon, has set itself apart from the crowd by propping up the local communities, not only paying "Indian fees," as is customary and

mandated by law, but also providing jobs, infrastructure, clean water, and a chance for the locals to support themselves. It's a most commendable enterprise. It's an effort that may go unnoticed by visiting anglers, as a whole, but you will no doubt feel the effects in how connected and hospitable the lodge is to its surroundings and the local people. Lodges that give back are places anglers should support anyway, but the inviting feeling that these places evoke will likely reward you tenfold.

Andros Island Bonefish Club is hardly just a lodge. It is a reflection of its people. The grounds of the lodge are an extension of the island itself and carry with it a distinct style and character that is Andros Island. Its history is written in the land for all to see, and it is a rich history.

How does this particular venue connect to its community? It's a second-generation, family-owned lodge, and though the most obvious way it gives back is through the jobs it

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provides—cooks, mechanics, guides, and the like—AIBC’s real benefit to Andros Island is in how it paved the way and showed locals that not only was owning a lodge feasible, but that the way forward for these lodges was the practice of catch-and-release, though so many once thought otherwise.

Andros has seen its population decline over the years—mostly due to its remoteness and lack of jobs—but AIBC remains an anchor of business for the area, and a great example for others on the island. AIBC is the legacy of the Leadon family. Founded by the family patriarch, Rupert Leadon, this club is one of the catalysts for the spread of fly fishing for bonefish on Andros and in the Bahamas as a whole. With the guidance of anglers like Lefty Kreh, Billy Pate, and George Hommel, Rupert founded AIBC on the principles of catch-and-release fly fishing, and he showed that Bahamians could take charge of their own destinies. This is where it all began on Andros. This is where the fly-fishing culture started.

And you can feel it when you’re here.

Today, the lodge continues to give back to the Bahamas as whole through Rupert’s son, Sean, who is the head guide and a trusted resource for the Bahamian government in its decision-making for the new laws and regulations regarding the bonefishing resource. Sean carries the Leadon torch and has the respect of many in the industry. Rupert’s daughter, Juliette, the owner and operator of the lodge, is also a torchbearer for her father’s legacy, and she handles the books and office work. She is the charming, hospitable, and a warm face of the club as well.

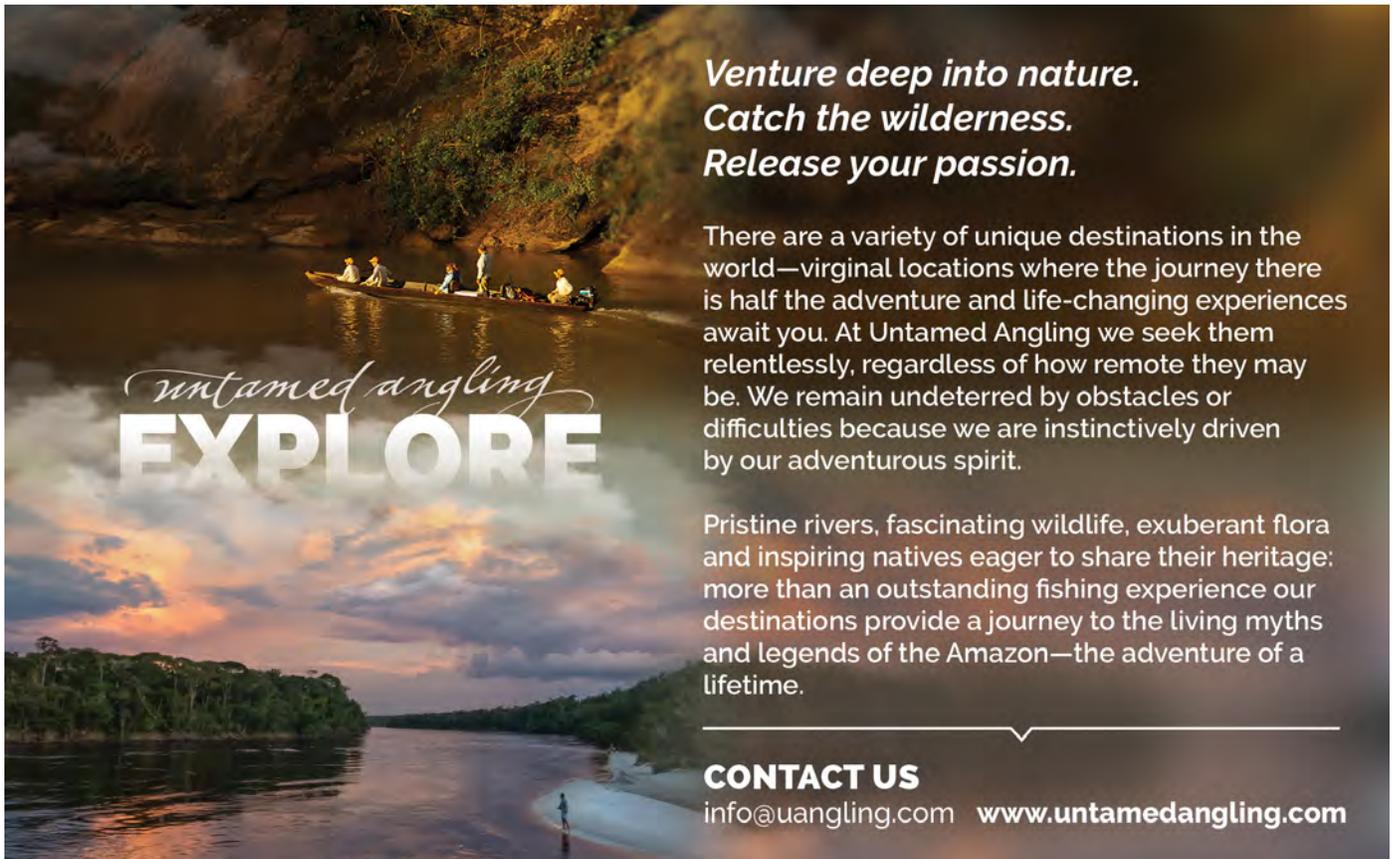
The lodge itself is rustic and quaint, situated in the tiny village of Cargill Creek, and it has a beautiful eastern view of the water and the flats that lie just across the creek. Though it is small, the grounds are well kept and there is plenty of space to stretch your legs. The area is rich in the local flora and fauna, including beautiful palms, sea grape trees, and the *Agave sisalana*, or sisal plant. You will notice stone structures on the property that are the

remnants of the area’s colonial life as a sisal plantation.

The club has a maximum capacity of 24 guests at full double occupancy. The grounds consist of five buildings, three that are guest quarters, one that doubles as an office and storage building, and then the main clubhouse, which, as you might expect, is the hub of activity for the club and its guests.

The rooms are plenty big enough for two guests. They are practical in nature and lack the flourishes one might expect at a top-end lodge. They are equipped with reasonably comfortable beds, rod racks, a small refrigerator, lamps, a bedside table, an air-conditioning unit, and a bathroom. The bathroom is equally utilitarian, as it has all the essentials, but, again, nothing elaborate. Expect the random cracked tile and a little rust on the metal surfaces, but other than that, everything is in working order and serves its purpose.

As I stated before, I wanted something authentic, and I wanted to experience the real Bahamas. Though



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the notion changes depending on place and time, I usually don't care for luxury when I'm fishing. I have one thing on my mind, and I plan to spend very little time in my room on most trips.

In the more elaborate and decorative clubhouse, all meals are served at long rows of tables that inevitably bring guests closer together over the course of the week. Breakfast was a sort of dealer's choice, as you could order eggs, toast, bacon, grits, fruit, or whatever was available. There was no real menu, just two dedicated cooks, led by Ms. Sephora, who took care of your every culinary need at breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Coffee was ready around 6 a.m., breakfast could be ordered as soon as 6:30, and while waiting for your order, you would pack a lunch to take on the boat. Lunch consisted of a selection of meats, cheeses, bread, peanut butter, jelly, oranges, apples, bananas, and chips. Dinners were planned by the staff, and during our stay we had various meals featuring a main meat or seafood dish—lobster, fried grouper, chicken, and conch to name a few. There was always a soup served before the main course, and a plate of delicious johnny bread to pick at while chumming it up with other guests in anticipation of the main course. After the meal, there was usually a dessert as well.

The clubhouse also features a small yet comfortable sitting area with a TV and wireless internet if you wish to have some connection to the outside world, though, I highly recommend against it. The internet was down the first night we arrived, but we couldn't have cared less. It was fixed the next day. That's how it goes on the island. Nothing is taken for granted, and there is a do-it-yourself type of mentality that makes the locals very resourceful and handy. If it's broke, you fix it. If you don't know how, there's always someone within earshot who does. That goes for A/C units, boat motors, and even Wi-Fi connections.

The clubhouse also has a back patio with a lightly stocked bar

and covered seating area. Further representing the laid-back, do-it-yourself mentality is the simple clipboard that hangs from a nail on the wall that guests use to tally their beverage count throughout their stay. The large cooler is stocked with Kalik and various American light beers, while the shelves sport a few choice hard liquors. The bar is reminiscent of a well-stocked college party, but one with better taste—not too many of my college buddies drank Johnny Walker. We would end each outing here sharing a beer and discussing the day's events with our guide as we watched the waves roll in across the flats. A nice touch was the large plate of conch fritters or chicken wings brought out for anglers and guides to enjoy. Talk



about a perfect way to end your day!

As for the fishing, we would usually load the boats and be on the water by 8 a.m. The morning commute was usually around 30 minutes to get to the desired flats or area to be targeted that day. We would usually fish until 3:30—depending on how far away from the lodge we were—and be back at the lodge by 4 p.m.

During our stay—and as is always a possibility with early-season trips (ours was October 16–20)—the weather was a bit unpredictable. We were somewhat hampered by a consistent and heavy wind from the east that made casting difficult and usually meant that we were forced to fish the leeward side of coves and flats. These winds made the water choppy and the commute extended, but our guide navigated the waves and reefs with expert precision.

Our guide—and Juliette's husband—Danny Newbold was very knowledgeable and patient with us beginners and our lack of bonefish

experience. Danny has a thick Bahamian accent and, for some, may be hard to understand at first, but the key words will stand out and direct anglers to fish without a problem. "Feesh comin aht tehn a'clock!"

Danny would often have to juggle the precarious winds, the direction the fish were heading, and our casting abilities in order to position us in a way to be successful, which he did. We were casting to groups of bonefish ranging from singles and doubles to groups of 20 and 30 fish. Though there were plenty of bigger bones that we could see as singles or leading the groups that swam into our flats, the fish averaged somewhere around the four-pound mark. We had several shots at fish that were around eight pounds.

We weren't the only ones who knew where to find fish in such windy conditions. The lemon sharks were often patrolling the leeward sides of the flats that were left unmuddied from the 15-plus-knot winds. This made fishing a bit stressful at times, but, as we found out, Danny had a plan.

After hooking up with my first big bonefish of the trip, I suddenly heard Danny yell, "Ahh Nooo!" I turned and saw the dorsal fin and thrashing tail of a six-foot lemon shark that was bee-lining for the silvery streak at the end of my line. At that moment, Danny turned on the engine and started revving it. The shark thus began to lose sight and sound of my catch, and I was able to pull the fish from its jaws and wrangle it into the boat. A half-second slower reaction from Danny would have ended badly for the bonefish; as it was, it escaped the ordeal with a few missing scales on its flank.

The engine wasn't always necessary when warding off predators. Most times, Danny would start stomping on the deck of the boat and we would follow suit. This managed to ward off any unwanted visitors, but I couldn't help but think of how funny this little scene must have looked to non-anglers or passers-by in the area. We no doubt looked like a bunch of goofballs doing our best impression of

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a Jed Clampett hillbilly dance.

Danny also insisted on giving our flies a rubdown in the flats silt before we started casting. He said this would help eliminate any unwanted scents that may have carried over from breakfast, lunch, or sunscreen application. Is it a proven scientific method? I'll leave that to the guys in lab coats. I've learned to trust the guides, and if the flies need a mud bath then they get one!

We mostly threw Gotcha flies in various sizes and colors, but a size 2 in a cream and tan color scheme was the real meal ticket. AIBC generally does not supply gear and flies, and what you bring is what you've got. We had flies but not many of the Gotcha variety, but we were lucky that another set of guests had plenty and were willing to share.

Aside from sharing their flies with us, these particular guests were a wealth of knowledge. They were regulars at AIBC and would travel to Andros at least once a year to spend a week at the club.

I once asked them, "Have you guys fished other lodges on the island?"

"No. Why would we? We love it here. They're like our family."

That, to me, speaks volumes.

In two days of guided fishing, we boated around 14 fish between the two of us. We lost around another eight to mangroves, bad hook sets, and fate, but considering the less-than-favorable conditions and our general lack of experience, we both considered it an overwhelming success. We also spent a day DIY wade-fishing the flats in front of the lodge. That's where I saw the biggest bonefish of the trip. I once had a follow from a pair of fish that could have easily been around the 10-pound mark. To be honest, at first I didn't think they were bonefish, but rather a pair of barracuda cruising the area, and that hesitancy may have cost me the fish of a lifetime. We did, however, manage to catch another three bonefish while wading, and I also caught a small crevalle jack and several smaller barracuda. Another successful day!

My only regret, other than fly

selection, was that I wished I had brought wire or bite tippet and a 10-weight to throw at the various lemon sharks. We saw them range from two and a half to eight feet in length and, since I generally will target any fish I can, I am sure it would have been an incredible fight!

The trip was free of stress and any major problems, although we did experience a few hiccups. The first night, we retired to our room and found that it was a bit muggy. We thought that the unit couldn't compete with the heat outside and we resorted to opening the door and the windows to let the cool breeze in. We were able to sleep, but pretty uncomfortably, despite the breeze. Come to find out, this particular unit was simply not functioning properly. So, Juliette switched us to another room the next day. Had we reported it to her the night of, we could have been moved sooner and slept comfortably, but we hadn't made them aware of the problem. I'll take the blame on that one. On a positive note, they took the initiative to move all of our stuff to the new room so that we could get cleaned up and relax after a long day of fishing without being hassled by repacking and unpacking again. Nothing was lost in the process, and the room was a mirror image of our previous one. An unexpected and most appreciated effort.

Another night, the electricity went out for one to two hours due to an issue with the local petroleum-fired electrical plant. So, the room became muggy once again, but then the power came back on and all was well.

Though a bit out of the main action, one of my favorite parts of the trip happened when we heard that there were several locals who were big on pigeon hunting. After mentioning this to Juliette, she made a call and hooked us up with Eddie Smith, son of legendary fishing guide Charlie Smith (aka Crazy Charlie). Eddie is a local mechanic who often works for AIBC, but more importantly, he loves shooting white-crown pigeons—a species similar in size to our mourning

doves. These birds spend their nights in the mangroves and venture across the island in the mornings and evenings. They fly low and fast, and the locals say they can count the bullets as they dodge them.

Well, one morning Eddy picked us up and took us to see a place where they hunt for them. He even managed to shoot one for us in the process. We were grateful to see another area on the island and to take in a bit of local flavor and action. We thanked him and went our separate ways, but later that day as we waded the flats, he dropped off a few birds with the cooks, who in turn prepared them for us that evening. What a nice gesture. What an experience.

About a week after our trip, I sent an email to thank the couple that shared their flies with us. Their trip lasted another day or two after our departure, and they told me that the day after we left the waters turned to glass and the fish bite was strong. They managed to boat a nice tarpon that was cruising the bonefish flats on the west side of the island. The attached picture showed a 60-pound tarpon and an angler with a million-dollar smile. All I could think was, OK, time to start planning a second trip. —*Seth Fields*

Postscript: If you would like to see photos and a video from our trip, go to <https://www.grayssportingjournal.com/andros-island/>. The video is also on our website at <https://www.anglingreport.com/2018/11/28/andros/>.

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■ Subscriber Fred Miller sent us this report on a trip he took to South America to catch peacock bass—a lifelong dream of his. The trip sounds like it lived up to his expectations, and he hopes to go again in the future. Congrats on your success, Fred! He writes:

Peacock bass have been on my bucket list for some time now, and after fishing Alaska, Cuba, Kiritimati, Mongolia, Kamchatka, Iceland, Bolivia, Chile, and Argentina, I knew it was time to check off one more species and one more country with a trip to

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Brazil. I am 77 years old and need to accomplish these far-off adventures while I can.

I researched a number of operations in Brazil and am certainly familiar with (and like) Untamed Anglers, but when I saw that Michael Williams of Nomadic Waters Brazil was presenting at Blue Quill Anglers in Evergreen Colorado, I made the 54-mile round-trip journey to hear what he had to say. His pitch and description of the angling community he and his partner have created hit home, and I signed up.

As things turned out, there were some issues with the November week I opted for, but Michael graciously offered me a spot with a September 28–October 6 group hosted by Danny Reed and Crooked Creek Holler. I have just returned. What a week!

Getting to Manaus is easy. American, Delta, and LanAm all fly and route through Miami. Having had some near horrific experiences at MIA in the past, I am happy to report that changing planes there and reentry there were very easy and efficiently accomplished, with short times between my flights. I was lucky that my flights into MIA were not delayed because I didn't allow much time; no baggage was lost or delayed! Reentry with Global Entry or Mobile Passport took minutes. Customs and Border Protection had their act together, and the contact was effortless and quick.

Campos, Nomadic Waters' Manaus representative—and sometimes trip photographer—greeted us at the Eduardo Gomez International Airport's terminal 1. Entry into Brazil has been simplified and was also a near effortless process. Getting your 10-year visa online is easy now, albeit pricey, and mine was delivered in days. Passports were inspected and most folks were practically waived on through. We arrived on the 11 p.m. flight and it was nice to have Campos there with transportation to the Da Vinci hotel. Most of the local folks spoke little English, and my Spanish only helped some in reading Portuguese. Campos also helped later with any interactions

in Manaus where language would have been a barrier, and, for those who arrived a day earlier, he organized and provided a daylong tour of Manaus (opera house, zoo, fish market, and more).

The Da Vinci Hotel was clean, comfortable, and cool. Breakfast was also included. The in-house restaurant's dinner choices were good, although somewhat limited. Their caipirinha, Brazil's national cocktail, made with cachaça (sugarcane hard liquor), sugar, and lime was quite good and they had a keg of cold CHOPP beer in the lobby.

Mid-morning Saturday we headed toward the domestic, charter side of Eduardo Gomez International Airport (terminal 2) and 55 minutes later, RICO Air, a regional charter carrier flew us in a 20-passenger, twin-engine turbo-prop into Urucará, Amazonas, a small town with a single, not-often-used dirt airstrip. We flew at 9,000 feet, just high enough to get some cool air into the passenger section. The plane on the ground was annoyingly hot until we reached altitude. Local kids flocked to the strip to see the planes arrive and depart and to see the outsiders who were disembarking. Bring some treats along for the kids, if you wish. In São Sebastião we met the mothership, which is new to Nomadic Waters and an improvement over past years. No longer is an hours-long speedboat ride needed to meet up.

The ship is leased from a family that Matt has been friends with for years. This was the first year the ship was available for the Nomadic Waters' season. They will be using it again in 2019.

We were each assigned an individual, air-conditioned room with its own bath, including a gravity-fed shower. Their policy of single occupancy as standard is unique. The shower and bathroom sink water was filtered and treated river water, but you would not want to drink it. Commercial bottled water was always available at water stations all around the mother for filling your “kick plastic” stainless water bottle. I quickly learned that the rooftop storage tank of filtered water

cooled appreciably at night but was pleasantly warm in the late afternoon; one can choose a shower time based on the preferred water temperature. No water heaters are necessary or available. The temperatures in different locations varied between 83 and 90 degrees Fahrenheit.

Your room's temperature was individually managed and could get quite cold. Old and small American Airlines blankets were available in any number desired in addition to the light blankets on each bed if you felt the need. Brazilians don't sleep on sheets or have fancy pillows except in the better hotels, but Nomadic Waters recognizes the need to provide sheets and decent pillows and will likely provide sheets and replace the firm, foam rubber pillows next season. I brought my own feather pillow, primarily to cushion some gear in my duffel, but it proved handy. Flush toilets almost like home made that task easy. Brazilian ships are built to house Brazilians and other folks less than five feet nine inches in height. At six foot two, I bumped my head often on ceiling beams and stairwells until I got in sync walking head bowed much of the time in the ship's interior.

The third level had an open air but covered deck with ample hammocks for naps or sleep when cool. This also proved a great and easy place for rod assembly and storage. Many of us napped after returning to the ship for lunch at noon. An hour's siesta after more than five hours of fishing prepared me for three more hours' fishing before dinner.

Meals, including many great desserts like cupuaçu cream flan in various flavors, were created and prepared by Cleide and Gruede, the onboard chef and sous chef, and one always had options of beef, pork, and chicken prepared one way or another or local fish. We ate *Arapaima gigas*, also known as pirarucu; red-bellied piranha, also known as *Pygocentrus nattereri*; and other local fish, each delicious, different, and never in short supply. Available beverages included CHOPP and BRAHMA beer, various

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local sodas like Guarana Antarctica (several flavors), tonic water, Vulcano Energy Drink, and of course whatever spirits were left by prior guests or carried by guests from home or duty-free shops in Miami. Staff ate with guests, truly extended-family style, much like a weekend celebration. We all ate the same food. Local folk, guides, and crew ate just what we ate and were always treated like family. Staff members were each paid equally.

A vegetarian guest decided to turn pescatarian for the week, but salads, steamed vegetables, roasted potatoes and yucca, and lots of fresh fruit were abundantly available. I did not see any tofu or field roast, however. The celebratory last night on the river with dinner on shore was delightful, albeit a sad opportunity to say farewell.

Some of the guides are learning to fly-fish and Ney is getting quite good. I watched him catch ten butterfly and pacu while I took a break and ran the trolling motor. The guides are dedicated and loyal. One quit his municipal day job when told he couldn't do both and he had to choose.

I was up at 4:45 each morning for breakfast at 5:30 and departure by 6:30. We fished two to a US-made Bass Tracker, each with a 60 horsepower Yamaha outboard. These boats can move, and you don't want to waste time puttering around in anything slower. The rare motor issue was quickly repaired. By dinner at around 7:00, your laundry left in the morning was dry and ready for you. You can really pack light. Dona Luzia kept on top of the laundry, often twice a day if needed. Some staff slept on board the mothership, and others slept on an auxiliary craft. "Junior" managed the crew and took care of things not needing Matt or Michael. When I suggested early morning coffee well before the coffee at breakfast, it appeared every morning thereafter. Brazilians prefer a sweetened, adulterated coffee, but for those of us who like it black, it was always available.

Fishing went from good to

fantastic, and records were kept daily of the numbers for each species landed. Our group of nine landed 993 fish in six days. We all worked hard that last afternoon to break 1,000 but fell short. It was, however, a Nomadic Waters record. My days varied from two fish landed to 69 fish landed! Butterfly peacock are small, but pacu up to 10 pounds were frequently caught. Acu up to 18 pounds were also frequently caught. Large fish were lost and at least one was stolen by a freshwater dolphin and not counted. I probably caught four species of peacock and at least four other species including dogfish, piraque, Apapa, and bicuda. Two different types of piranha, red-bellied and black, were caught by others but refused to consider my flies.

The Amazon River dolphin averages about 6.5 feet in length. They come in all shades of pink, from a dull gray-pink, to rosy colored pink, to a bright pink like that of the flamingo. This color variation is due to the clarity of the water in which the dolphin lives; the darker the water, the pinker the dolphin will be. The sun's rays cause the dolphins to lose their pink pigmentation. Murky water helps to protect the dolphin's bright hue. These animals are also known to flush to a bright pink when excited. There are several anatomical differences between the Amazon River dolphin and other types of dolphins. For one, Amazon River dolphins are able to turn their necks from side to side, while most species of dolphin cannot. This trait coupled with their ability to paddle forward with one flipper while paddling backward with the other helps them maneuver when the river floods. These dolphins will actually swim up over the flooded land and their flexibility helps them to navigate around trees. Additional characteristics that set these dolphins apart from other species are molar-like teeth that allow them to chew their prey and bristle-like hairs at the ends of their snouts that help them search for food on the muddy river bottoms.

Some of us visited several very

small communities up river, each with perhaps eight to ten families (of, on average, six persons per family). I brought two soccer balls and two pumps with me from the states and gifted a set to each of the two communities I visited. When a village elder was asked what sports the kids liked, the answer was "bola." I expected to hear, "futbal" and learned that there is only one type of ball game for these folks. They play bola and one community of eight families graciously accepted my gift and took it to their village's very own campo de bola where one of the youths nailed a goal and pointed to the heavens.

The Amazon and its tributaries are so tannin rich and acidic that I saw no mosquitos at any time during the week. I heard that mosquitos are numerous once you walk into the selva, or jungle, where they can breed in trapped rainwater. I never used the DEET I brought, never used my face net and was bitten by something non-mosquito only once. Others chose not to, but I faithfully continued my Malarone dosing. Signs in villages warned about the prevalence of malaria, and we saw bugs on display that looked like they could carry off a small child. One guest carried an EpiPen just in case.

The Amazon and its tributary rivers are magnificent and truly amazing. We did not see any caiman because of the high water but were told they were there and in large size and numbers. Just two months earlier, I had seen endless numbers in Bolivia's Secure River. Stories abound about locals, crocodiles, and freshwater stingrays, meant that we did not go wading.

Green and white flies worked well again and again. Chartreuse seemed to be the most productive color. Blue and dark did not produce this week. Red worked at times for some folks. Perhaps half the groups were spin fishermen, bringing large acu to the surface with a noisy Wood Chopper. The Wood chopper in action was also used as an attractor and stimulant to the big fish. Gunnar Brammer

(Brammer's Custom Flies, <https://www.streamersbygunnar.com/>) sold creative tube-style streamers and was a guest on this trip. He tied and created new YouTube videos when not on the water. I hope to use the flies I bought from him on this trip in the future. I was successful with Enrico Puglisi flies, some leftover golden dorado flies, and even a couple of occasional tarpon flies I had lying around.

A nine-pound (4 kg+) pacu followed almost immediately by a seven-pounder (3 kg+) were my best fish, but my boat partners connected with 15- and 18-pound pacu, as did several others in the group. None in our area reached or exceeded 20 pounds, though Michael and Matt suspect they are there.

I used Rio Outbound Short intermediate tropical lines on my 9- and 10-weight rods. Others really liked full sink lines, but the water was dropping fast and these could be problematic. Water temperatures of 85 to 90 mean your stateside cold-water trout lines won't serve you well here. Ours was the hottest week of the season according to a fellow I met back in Manaus. We had barely a drop of rain. Nighttime

temperatures dropped down in the 60s, but not until the very early morning hours. Daytime temps were unusual and often close to 100. White socks helped shield the tops of my feet, sun gloves and a buff helped shield hands and face from the midday sun. I wore the socks in the afternoon when the carpeted deck felt uncomfortably hot.

Between dry and flood seasons the Amazon in some locations gains 90 feet in depth and miles in width. In Manaus the high-water mark is charted on various walls and exceeded thirty feet from where the water was while we were there. In places, the river is eleven miles wide! Man, could we use some of that water here in Colorado this summer.

We returned to Manaus, stopping to refuel in São Sebastião, and were allowed to rest up, shower, and shave before the 11:50 p.m. return flight to Miami in rooms at the Da Vinci, a nice touch. Campos accompanied us to dinner at Gaucho's Churrascaria, a delightful option for anyone desiring a hearty and mostly red-meat dinner, though chicken and a few other options were also available. The delivery of the various savory cuts of meat was restaurant performance I'd not seen

before.

The mothership operation is neither fancy or exuberant, but it is very comfortable and accommodating. Its friendly provincial quality is warm and welcoming. The owners, Michael and Matt, are on board during every trip. Michael fishes with the guests every day. Guides and fishing partners are rotated. Few if any things go wrong.

Michael provided incredible pre-trip preparation information well before departure and continuously updated it by email and through the Nomadic Waters website www.nomadicwaters.com.

Language limited communication in my opinion. I'd like to learn additional words in Portuguese before I go back. Michael's small language chart was helpful, although limited. There were no limits to guide and staff helpfulness despite the language issues, however. It was not a barrier to a wonderful week.

And the pricing difference between this and other peacock bass operations is a dealmaker. The 2019 pricing is going to be \$5,013 for the week; \$4,950 if booked and paid before April 1, 2019. I'm saving up.

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Special Report

Alaska/Kamchatka Air Service Canceled: 2019 Fishing Season Will Be Impacted

by Don Causey, Founder and Editor Emeritus of The Angling Report

Founding editor, Don Causey recently alerted us to the following, which we sent out in an email bulletin three weeks ago. Due to the importance of this particular issue and because some readers may have missed the email, we are republishing it here. We will keep you posted in regard to this story and any developments that we discover. Did you miss this bulletin? Add your email to our list by going to <https://www.anglingreport.com/subscribe-to-our-newsletter/>.

If you are among the 300-plus anglers planning to fish the Kamchatka Peninsula of Russia next year, your plans just got more complicated. Seems the ultra-convenient air service between Anchorage and Petropavlovsk has been abruptly canceled for the 2019 season. Unless a new provider of air service emerges, this leaves booked anglers with the alternative of flying through Seoul, South Korea, or through Moscow to reach Kamchatka. Both alternatives have drawbacks, and during previous periods when direct air service was not available, a substantial number of anglers chose to cancel their trips.

As for the stated cause of the air-service cancellation, it stems from a runway issue at Yakutsk Airport in Russia, according to a press release we received November 2 from IPAM (Inter-Pacific Aviation and Marketing, Inc.), the entity that put together the near-flawless Yakutia air service that has served the angling travel community well for more than a decade. Seems the kind of plane Yakutia Airlines uses on the route cannot land on the shorter runway that will be available in 2019 during an ongoing construction project. That caused Russia's Federal Air Transport Agency (Rosaviatsia) to

cancel Yakutia Airlines' authorization to fly the route, referring to the action as a "ban" that "prevents the airline from operating on the Anchorage-Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky route." The release goes on to note that the airport in Yakutsk will be "undergoing runway repairs for the duration of the 2019 summer construction season, and fully laden Boeing 737-800 aircraft—such as those chartered by IPAM for the Alaska-Kamchatka service—will be prohibited from operating there. We must therefore announce, with deep regret, that the Alaska-Russian Far East Service that IPAM/AirRussia established in partnership with Yakutia Airlines will not operate in the summer of 2019. IPAM/AirRussia has been unable to reach an agreement with other qualified carriers to perform the service."

As bad as all this sounds, there are some positive elements to consider. First, the cancellation of air service this time did not have to do with inadequate traffic, which was at the root of previous closures. In fact, traffic on this route has been good, and growing, in recent years. By all reports, the consortium that put the Yakutia service together was

pleased with the financial results. This increases the chances that another carrier will emerge in time for the 2019 season. As regards the timing of this cancellation announcement, it is far better than the last one, which was announced on the eve of the fishing season. That left the three agents who book Kamchatka (The Fly Shop, The Best of Kamchatka, and Ouzel Expeditions) in a very expensive bind. Reached as this was written, The Fly Shop owner, Mike Michalak, says he dug into company and personal funds back then to the tune of \$440,000 to make all his clients whole. The other two agents had not called us back at press time to divulge how much they owed back then and how they handled their obligations to clients, as well as their plans for the 2019 season.

As for The Fly Shop's plans for 2019, the representative we spoke with was clearly surprised by the sudden air service cancellation development but was still bullish on the long-term situation. He says Kamchatka fishing has been one of the most successful fly-fishing programs The Fly Shop ever created. Nearly 75 percent of Kamchatka clients have been repeating annually in recent years, he said, and the backlog of



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would-be clients is growing. Months before the season begins, he says, The Fly Shop has 249 clients lined up, ready to go for 2019, but at this point most have paid only a small \$1,000 good-faith deposit. If no new carrier emerges, he said, The Fly Shop is fully prepared to refund (or reschedule) everyone, and he was putting that promise into a letter to all booked and would-be booked clients when we reached him. Given the loyalty of his Kamchatka following, he was cautiously optimistic that most clients will still want to go to

Kamchatka even if they have to get there via Seoul, South Korea (which takes an extra day), or via Moscow (which also takes an extra day, plus it involves a very long flight clear across Russia). Indeed, The Fly Shop was able to operate a very successful Kamchatka program during previous service interruptions.

Understandably, two days after the surprise cancellation news, The Fly Shop was not ready to provide clear guidance on its 2019 plans. Booked clients should wait for his letter to receive that. In the meantime,

there is indeed a realistic possibility that another carrier will emerge to operate the Anchorage/Petropavlovsk flight service in time for the 2019 season. Better yet, there is some speculation that a new carrier may be open to the prospect of flying directly from Seattle to Petropavlovsk, instead of from Anchorage. That would make the “world’s best trout fishing” (which is how many returning anglers describe the Kamchatka fishery) even more easily accessible than it has been in recent years. Stay tuned for updates on this important development.

• On the Radar •

Angling Report subscribers are always looking for new opportunities and waters to explore. In this section, we will provide you with details for new and expanded operations that are popping up on the international and domestic radar.

When most people think of Green Bay, Wisconsin, it’s likely not the fly-fishing that comes to mind. Most will think of the droves of cheesehead faithful gathered under the lights of Lambeau Field being covered with heavy snow, or maybe some industrial backdrop overlooking Lake Michigan. While these typecasts are undeniably true and a large part of Green Bay’s history and culture, I am here to tell you that there is another side to the coin. Green Bay, and Northern Wisconsin as a whole, is blessed with an abundance of stunning landscapes and fertile waters. From big-river muskies and small-stream brook trout to Great Lakes steelhead and world-class smallmouth fishing, you name it; they are a hop, skip, and a jump away from Tight Lines Fly Shop.

Okay, Tight Lines is technically in De Pere, Wisconsin, but this small town is well-blended into the cityscape of greater Green Bay and shares the banks of the Fox River with its neighboring metropolis. The shop sits right off of I-41 and is an unassuming juggernaut in Northern Wisconsin’s fly-fishing scene. I recently spoke with Tight Lines’ guide and owner, Tim Landwehr, about his shop and some of their guided fly-fishing offerings.

People might not know it, but

there are lots of great opportunities and a wide variety of species for fly rodders to target in your area. Could you tell us a bit about the area and what kinds of fishing opportunities there are through your shop?

I am originally from De Pere and originally became a guide for Wild Trout Outfitters in Big Sky, Montana. My friends thought I was crazy when my wife, Sarah (Boise, Idaho, native) and myself decided to open our shop back in the Midwest. The shop truly is smack-dab in the middle of fly-fishing nirvana and no one knows about it except its residents! The sport revolves around a trout culture, so it is not surprising when new anglers step into the shop, scratch their heads, and ask, “Where can you fly fish around here?” The truth is we are not far from the largest concentration of spring creeks—with the best access—in North America.

Trout aside, the host of warm-water species is absolutely mind-boggling. We truly have the best smallmouth fishing in the world, and with the rapid growth in musky angling, people are flocking to the north woods with fly rod in hand. The flats of Green Bay and Lake Michigan are loaded with hard-to-catch carp, and they give locals a similar experience to stalking the flats. Speaking of the Great Lakes, we are surrounded by a miniature

ocean, home to migrating populations of giant lake-run brown trout (some over 20 pounds), steelhead, chinook, coho salmon, and some of the largest smallmouth on planet Earth. All of this angling is just a short drive from the shop; maybe Sarah and I were not as crazy as my buddies thought.

Do you have wade-fishing and floating options for anglers?

We have plenty of both wade and floating options for anglers. Most of the floatable rivers in our area are best for warm-water species like smallmouth and musky. The large, beautiful freestone rivers just get too warm in the summer months to hold good trout populations. They do, however, allow us to cover huge amounts of water with poppers and big streamers effectively in drift boats or rafts. Most all of the rivers, including the large freestone ones, offer plenty of wading opportunity, however. During summer months they become low and warm, perfect for wading on foot. Most all of our spring creeks are small and managed best by wading. The flats on the Bay of Green Bay and Lake Michigan are great on foot as well. We have vast amounts of water with zero fishing pressure.

Two-handed rods have become very popular in our neck of the woods as well. During the spring and fall steelhead and

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brown runs, many anglers are fishing the long rods. Switch rods with shorter Skagit heads have become the norm on lots of our smaller tributaries and even fishing smallmouth with two-handers is gaining traction with the new fly line technology.

If you had to choose just one species and place to guide clients, what would you choose and why?

Smallmouth bass, hands down! This is truly our fish. They have never been stocked in our watershed, they fight like hell, they get massive, they eat on top and will absolutely double over a 7-weight! We float the best smallie water in the country. Smallmouth fishing is not always easy, but, as a customer once said, "I love these fish because they usually are pretty damn agreeable."

I also have been pretty proud that Tight Lines was the first operator in the Midwest to offer drift boat trips on an outfitter level. I remember buying a drift boat from my friends at Hyde, and they asked when they found out I was from Wisconsin "where are you gonna use it?" Fast-forward 20 years and drift boats are part of the Midwest landscape and we got to be part of that.

You have guides from all over come to guide for your shop. What is it that keeps customers and guides coming back to the area to fish with Tight Lines?

We now have a stable of up to nine guides that work through our shop

during our prime smallmouth season. A number of these guides have guided in the likely places like Colorado, Montana, and Alaska, but that is not why or how I hired them. The fishery of course helps keep people coming back, but I think it takes far more than that to be sustainable as an outfitter. It's about our guides; they are as good as you will find anywhere in the world. Each year we try and hold a guide meeting, and our head guide, Bart, always says, "It doesn't matter if you have been on the river 10-12 hours a day for 42 days straight, in the blazing sun. It doesn't matter that you are tired, miss your wife, kids, your girlfriend. This may be your 42nd day in a row, but it's your clients first, and maybe their only day of the year. Make it a good one!" This is the key to our success!

A good guide gets people to come back when the fishing is good. A great guide gets them to come back when fishing is horrible . . . period. In my hiring process for guides we really don't accept referrals from guide schools or seasoned guides sending us applications. We hire good, patient people with outstanding character and that's how we fill our days. The thing I am most proud of about the shop is the staff. We have a 96 percent return rate on guide trips and have less than 16 spots open for 2019 because of them.

Our guides have all been with us for a long time because of the community. We all live together in a remodeled

Wisconsin Ranger station in the small town of Pembine, Wisconsin, so we are close to the fishery. This most certainly makes for long days and stress on families, but it truly is a brotherhood. These guys are all my best friends. For all of this I am grateful to live, work, and fish in one of the finest places on the planet.

Tight Lines still has some of their 2019 calendar open. You can find more information about the full-service shop and their guiding operations, and book a trip at <http://tightlinesflyshop.com/>. Email them at tylinez@aol.com, or call 920-336-4106.

Trout Wade Trip

\$495* a day for one or two people
Mid-March through June

Giant Migratory Brown Drift-Boat Trip

\$495* a day for one or two people
Mid-October through November

Spring Steelhead Walk Wade Trip

\$495* a day for one or two people
Late March through May

Smallmouth Drift-Boat Trip

\$495* a day for one or two people

Musky Trips

\$495/day

