

SILVER, GOLD & ELECTRIC BLUE

Should you choose to accept this mission, be prepared for a great deal of travelling and logistical headache best given to someone else to organise.



Two countries, three very different locations

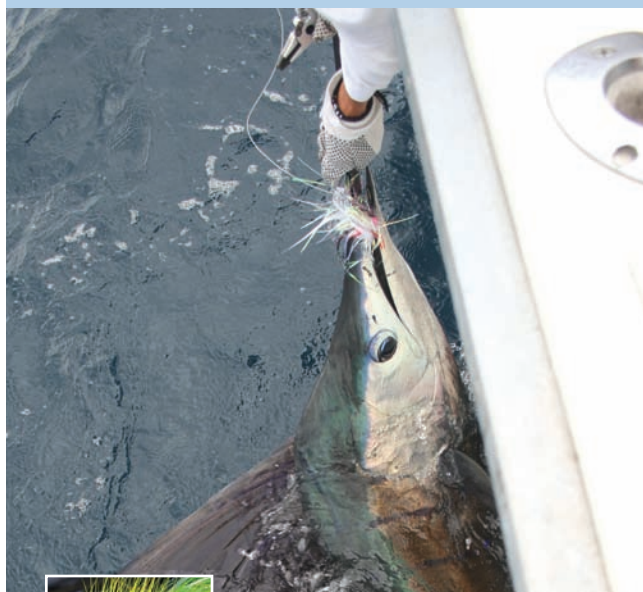
First stop: Argentina's Jurassic Lake. Nestling in the Patagonia wilderness, the camp is situated on the side of the lakes only tributary. The weather changes hourly and I found myself fishing into the teeth of the wind. Why? Monsterous wild rainbow trout – between 10 lbs to 20 lbs and hundreds of them. I averaged twenty fish a day and would urge everyone to try it.

Next stop: La Zona, a hydrodam on the border of Argentina and Uruguay where only the river and the meanest freshwater predator, 'trophy' sized golden dorado, separates the two. Where your labours will be rewarded on your first strip stike with an arm wrenching smash and aerobic display that will leave your jaw open, live long in your memory and have you wondering what took you so long to discover South America's most exciting and beautiful freshwater fish.



Last stop: Guatemala, a country where its Spanish and indigenous pasts mingle; no longer at odds with one another. We travelled through its highlands and lowlands, past the occasional smoking active volcano down to the coast where Guatemala hides another gem – one of the world's best sailfishing venues. We averaged fifteen fish raised to the boat each day and one member of our party, after a fifty-five minute fight of heart stopping jumps and neon blue flashes of its flanks, boated a 150 lbs specimen sailfish: luckily the fish envy and bragging were kept to a minimum.

This fly fishing adventure was blessed at all levels with professional and enthusiastic people. It was not a cheap trip in time or money but its memory will long outlast my bank balance and as someone once said, 'its always later than you think'.



FACT: There are direct flights from London to Buenos Aires on British Airways and will require an overnight both at the beginning and end of your trip. Flying from Buenos Aires to San Jose in Guatemala you will only need to spend one night in San Jose at the end of your trip. It is very easy to tag on some sites of interest such as the Iguazu Falls in Argentina or Antigua Guatemala for a full flavour of these two countries.

Aardvark McLeod

NEWSLETTER



Welcome...

As summer recedes, the news from across the fishing community is one of optimism, and regardless of the increasing turbulence in the financial markets, I can be the bearer of good news for our clients. International fishing is becoming cheaper. Iceland prices, for example, have dropped by as much as twenty percent and never has there been a better time to escape, put the cares of the world behind us, and continue in the effort to catch that fish of a lifetime.

Last autumn and this September I travelled extensively though Canada, from east coast to west. On the east coast I experienced some unique dry fly Atlantic salmon fishing on the rivers of the Gaspé peninsular and the Miramichi system in New Brunswick. On the west coast I was initiated into steelhead fishing at Bell 2 Lodge and Nicholas Dean Lodge in Northern British Columbia, something I will never forget. I can safely say I am a steelhead convert.



Mahseer on the fly

Having risen to, and survived, the challenges set so far by Peter (sailfish in Guatemala, bonefish in Belize and salmon in Iceland) Charlotte will be heading off to India in May 2009 to try and catch a mahseer on the fly and experience the wonders it has to offer.

There are only four places available on this trip which will run from 28th May to 5th June 2009, so if you are interested please contact her ASAP.

As we handle more and more trips for families and non-fishing spouses Charlotte went in search of discovery in Belize for three weeks in January. After catching her first bonefish on the fly at Turneffe Flats Lodge, she made her way through Ambergris Cay and then down the coast looking at many small boutique hotels and eco-tourism lodges along the way. She has returned an avid fisherwoman, bought a new 8 weight rod, and started building some fantastic combination trips.

New things to look out for this coming season are the developments to the fishing program in Los Roques in Venezuela, the new luxury yacht on Providence in the Seychelles, the addition of the Miramichi and Bonaventure in Canada to our salmon portfolio, our new steelhead operations in British Columbia, new bonefishing destination in the Bahamas, trout fishing in Montana, and finally the incredible giant dorado operation at La Zona in Argentina.

As our team here at Aardvark McLeod continues to expand with the addition of Nikki Stockwell and Anna Taylor, we look forward to another busy year. We are also very please to announce that Peter Baxendale, formerly of Strutt & Parker, will be joining our team in the Autumn. We would like to thank all those who have supported us over the past season and look forward to hearing your stories on your return.

the seychelles

For a year, her Dad and Grandpa talked about their amazing trip to the Seychelles in 2006. Then Claire Davis's Dad came home from work one night and said that there'd been a cancellation and a spot had opened up for the Spring 2007 trip. Amazingly for Claire, it somehow made perfect sense for her to miss school and go with her Dad to the Seychelles to fly fish! She was 11 years old and takes up her story.

Dad asked Mom at dinner if it made sense to take "one of the girls." I have two sisters, we all fish and hunt, and I am the youngest, so I figured my chances were slim to none. Plus we were all in school. I'm usually the last one in line, the bottom of the totem pole, so to speak. But this time, youth paid off! Katie was in her senior year of high school, and Brooke was a freshman. I was in sixth grade, and was not too worried about SATs or PSATs or going to dances, parties and college.

We flew from Los Angeles to Paris, and then to Mahé, the capital of the Seychelles. Twenty-four hours in planes, and exactly 12 time zones away from home. That night for dinner, our friend from England, Dr Eric Roberts, just had to order the fruit bat (we saw them flying around at sunset). Every time there is something abnormal to do, for instance eat fruit bat, or snails, or alligator, my dad dares me to do it. I usually give in, but sometimes I regret it. This time I didn't, regret it, that is. To my surprise fruit bat is pretty good.

The next morning, we were back at the airport waiting for the charter plane to fly us to Assumption Atoll, where we would board the Sea Star. The white sand beach at Assumption is incredibly beautiful and the Sea Star looked fantastic. That first afternoon on the Sea Star, the guides

FACT: Mahé is easy to reach with direct flights from London or via Paris. The Seychelles Archipelago has some of the best saltwater fishing around with seemingly endless white beaches and effortlessly comfortable resorts, the Seychelles has so much more to offer.



worked on everyone's gear while we met all the fishermen and women and girl (me) on the boat. We learned about Bimini twists, braided loop connections, 100 lb leader, 130 lb leader, etc, etc. It was hot and balmy, and everyone sat in the nice breeze around the big table at the back of the Sea Star.

Trolling out of Assumption that afternoon, we set out our lines and caught a lot of fish. In fact, we could hardly motor a few yards before a fish took our lures. It was crazy. I caught a nice giant trevally. When one of the reels went off everybody told me to go for it. It was pretty heavy but Eric came to help me hold the rod steady. It was great, but I realized then and there that catching a nice fish without anyone's help was what I needed to do.

By the end of the next day, fighting a fish by myself, landing them, holding them for pictures, and releasing them were all second nature to me! I caught my first bonefish that morning at Astove atoll. I also caught some small trevally and some snapper, all on flies. Over the next two days, we fished in the surf, in the one channel that drains the lagoon and in the inner lagoon of Astove. Dr Eric and my dad caught some nice giant trevally, as well as bonefish, triggers, snappers, and other fish. All on flies. On Astove I learned to hunt for fish, spot them in the surf and the flats, cast, strip, strip set, and fight the fish! It was great.

After two days on Astove, we motored to Cosmoledo where we would fish for the rest of the week. Our first day on Cosmo, I am told I caught the fish of a lifetime. We stopped the tender in the flats. Everyone else grabbed their 12 weight rods and walked off to fish for GTs. I had my 8 wt Sage, a Tibor Everglades reel, and a Green Machine tied on the end of some 12 lb leader.



I remembered what Keith had said about the small channels in the flats that bonefish like to swim through. I spotted a channel and waited. I saw a couple of bonefish and cast, but they just swam by. I kept walking slowly, making sure I didn't miss anything or disrupt the sand. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw some movement in the water very close to me. Two bonefish were swimming towards me. These were really big fish. I cast delicately, and dropped the Green Machine a little bit to the side of the lead fish. As soon as the fly hit the water the rest was a blur, my reel was going crazy and the rod was slipping out of my fingers. I gripped tightly. I knew that if I dropped the rod I would be the laughing stock of the trip. The pressure was on. I started screaming as the reel was screaming and the fish was going crazy.

I heard my dad laugh, as everyone headed back towards me. I had almost reeled the bonefish in when my dad arrived. I smiled, knowing everyone was in for a big surprise. My dad couldn't believe it. Everyone pulled out their cameras. This bonefish must be the most photographed bonefish in the Indian Ocean!



Australia

An exciting new saltwater fishery is in operation in the Coral Sea approximately 350 miles off Australia's Queensland coast. In this far flung corner of the Pacific Ocean are an array of atolls and reefs with exotic names such as Bugatti, Lizard and Diamond Islets. These conjure up images of empty sand beaches, formidable reefs and aquamarine water.

Due to its remote location these reefs have remained relatively unexplored. However advances in technology and the ability to search for and target fish in far flung seas are allowing these fisheries to be explored. A combination of a luxury mothership serviced by pair of Cessna 208A Caravan float planes, have allowed access to this wonderful fishery. The Coral Sea can be fished year round but each reef is fished for just two to three weeks per year. Through a strict catch and release policy, and the implementation of careful fisheries management, fishing pressure is non existent and each reef remains very much in a virgin state. Likewise with little commercial fishing and only one operator fishing these areas, fish populations are extremely healthy, fish sizes unbelievable and aggression levels obscene.

The food rich currents and large tidal range are a magnet to large ocean going pelagics and as a result the Coral Sea offers probably some of the best fishing in the world for giant trevally, dog tooth tuna, wahoo and marlin. Each reef and atoll has its own ecosystem made up of coral reef and sand cays; some stretching over 90 nautical miles in length and 40 nautical miles wide. Depending on the water depth and structure some are more suited to some species than others. Trips can therefore be tailored to target particular fish species. Bugatti reef is renowned for its giant trevally which reach weights of 150 lbs and commonly average a solid 50-60 lbs. These can be caught on a variety of methods from conventionally fished poppers to sight casting with large baitfish imitations fished on a #12 /#14 fly tackle. Wreck Reef has perhaps one of the most prolific wahoo populations in the world. Tremendous catches of

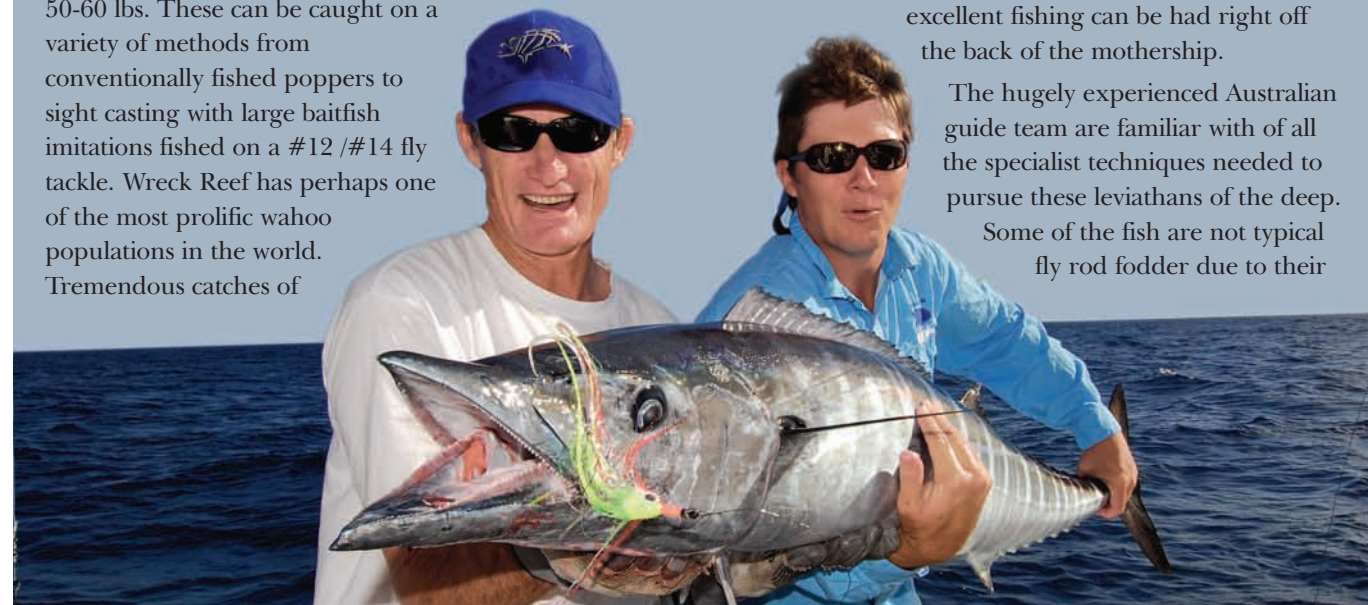
up to 40 wahoo to 100 lbs have been hooked in a single day on the fly. With their blistering pace they are akin to a giant turbo-charged bonefish.

The custom built 90' catamaran mothership, Odyssey, is fully equipped with all of the facilities needed to explore the most remote atolls in the world in comfort. Complete with the latest facilities and fishing equipment, it really is one of the best specialist fishing live aboard boats afloat today. The boat has a range of shared or single cabins, ample eating and relaxing areas, and full satellite communications. First class food is served daily, usually including freshly caught fish and shellfish.

Odyssey acts as a base for the 10-12 fishers that the operation accommodates each week but the fishing grounds are accessed using a variety of boats. There are two specialist 36' sportfishers used for the marlin fishing and deep water jigging for dogtooth tuna. A custom built 25' Contender is also used in conjunction with the 36' boats. Four 18' centre console sportfishers are used to access the channels and rips of the exposed atolls and are the ideal platform for fly anglers hunting trevally. Fishing is not only restricted to the boats. There is the opportunity to wander the remote beaches searching for blue fin trevally, coral trout, barracuda and a host of snapper species. At night Odyssey has special lights built into the hull which attract predatory fish; GTs in particular are attracted to floating structures, and some excellent fishing can be had right off the back of the mothership.

The hugely experienced Australian guide team are familiar with of all the specialist techniques needed to pursue these leviathans of the deep.

Some of the fish are not typical fly rod fodder due to their



proportions – many of the dog tooth tuna may be in excess of 200 lbs and their tactic to run straight for the reef when hooked leads to many break offs even with conventional tackle. Flinders Reef and the Diamond Islets are synonymous with 'grander' black marlin and conventional trolling during November and December offers the best chance of doing battle with these tremendous game fish.

Trips to the atolls are varied. Some may appeal to those anglers wishing to experiment with conventional gear such as deep jigging for dog tooth tuna whilst others may prefer the explosive surface action of GTs on poppers. For the fly angler the smaller black marlin and sailfish might appeal along with wahoo and dog teeth that can be teased up to the boat while fishing along the drop offs. The reefs and rips around the lagoon are the perfect habitat to sight cast to GTs along with bluefin trevally and the host of other species found there.

These fishing trips are not for the faint hearted – it is a long flight from the UK. However for those hardcore saltwater fishers the Coral Sea may well be one of the most rewarding fishing environments in the world. The fish are big, incredibly strong and very aggressive. One can expect to be bruised and battered by the end of the week and most likely to have tackled some of the finest fighting fish in the world.



FACT: With regular flights from London to Sydney with Virgin, Qantas and Cathay Pacific, visitors can then connect with a flight to Hamilton Island on the Queensland coast. The overnight there allows one to recuperate and relax after the flight. The mothership will be met out on one of the reefs using the Cessna floatplanes and from then 6 exhilarating days of fishing will follow.

Los Roques has been at the forefront of the world of saltwater fly fishing for over 15 years. This archipelago of islands and flats is 250 miles off the coast of Venezuela and has had saltwater fishermen flocking from all over the world to experience its world class bone fishing. Peter McLeod recently returned from his fifth trip here, and is happy to report that it continues to deserve its well founded reputation; quite a feat, as well established fisheries often succumb to excessive pressure, making the fishing tougher.

What makes Los Roques truly unique is that the whole area is a national park and over a third of the archipelago is restricted. This means there is a constant refreshing of the fish populations as schools cycle through these areas. That does not mean to say that all the fishing is easy!

The pancake flats of Los Roques are spectacular. These areas of hard raised coral rise from the turquoise water providing a perfect feeding area for hungry fish within easy bolting distance of deep water. For this reason these fish are often very large. Finding bonefish tailing on these flats is perhaps the epitome of sight fishing for bonefish. The flats are often so shallow the fish move around with their backs and tails protruding from the surface. The hard part is sneaking up on them, and the nearest analogy would be dry fly fishing. Long leaders, accurate casts and delicate presentations are required with small flies, but the visual aspect of seeing a four to five pound bonefish come paddling across the flat after your imitation with its belly on the turtle grass is one you will never forget.. especially if you land it! Although difficult, it is incredibly rewarding and spending time on these flats with excellent guides will certainly make you a better fisherman.



The comfortable 28 foot pangas will whisk you from one flat to another, normally with the wind at your back. As you finish one the boat driver will bring the boat round to enable you to move swiftly onwards to the next opportunity. These excellent craft also have a bimini roof that allows one to escape from the midday sun, a fantastic addition, especially if you have a non – fishing companion with you. However the pancake flats are only one small facet of this vast fishery that is approximately 600 square kilometres. Los Roques is one of the only fisheries where you will find such a huge diversity of saltwater environments. There are ocean flats, marl flats, sand flats, pancake flats, beach flats, and also mangrove lagoon areas to hunt for baby tarpon and snook. Each provide a unique challenge and offer a variety of species to target.

It would not be prudent to discuss Los Roques without talking about the minnows. The reason the fish become so large here (the largest bonefish I have had a client catch was 14 lbs) is every beach and flat you come across is covered in small inch long silver minnows. The bonefish and tarpon hit these with abandon, and these fish are aggressive. It is possible to stand on the dock in the evening and watch ten pound bonefish attack pelicans as they dive into the bait balls to Hoover

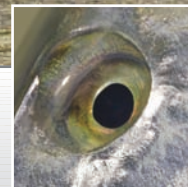
LOS ROQUES GOES FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH

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the minnows from inside their mouths. We also tangled with a few monsters as evening entertainment, as there are fish swimming around there in their mid teens, and I am not talking about age. Over the last year many improvements have been made and now I can safely say that we are offering the finest operation on the island. The operator has paved the way for the future with one of the most professional operations I have had the pleasure to fish with. They only have new boats, and are currently upgrading each to new 4 stroke 100 horse power engines to make the ride faster, quieter and more ecologically friendly. It also allows clients to fish some of the more distant outer areas. The guides are hand picked and many of them trained personally, and each has their own personality providing a varied experience.

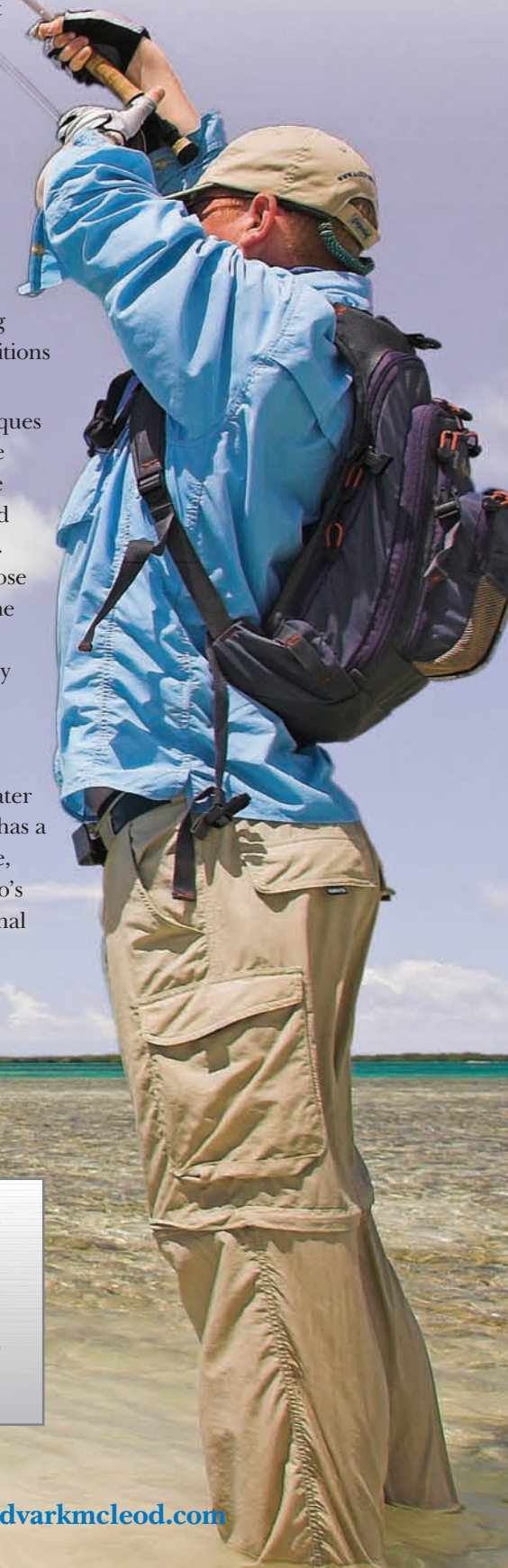
Currently we can accommodate 12 anglers in six boats with the likely addition of two more boats next season. It is important to note for those who know Los Roques that this is not adding more pressure to the fishery as they will merely be replacing the third operator; there are only a certain number of licenses available to fish in the park, and this number does not increase. It is vital to use a licensed operator in order to have the opportunity to fish in these areas, or you will only be accessing a tiny proportion of the fishery; the area that tourists access on a daily basis. This season Aardvark McLeod are exclusively experimenting with bluewater options and potential live aboard expeditions to other nearby atolls using Los Roques as a base.

Accommodation has always been an issue on Gran Roques (the main island) as hot water and air conditioning have been sought-after commodities. No longer. Last year we moved into the Cuarela Posada which is so far removed from anything I have previously stayed at on the island. The posada is owned and run by Angelo Belvedere whose attention to detail is outstanding. Only 30 yards from the beach and the boats, this posada is covered in greenery, and nothing is too much trouble for the staff. Assisted by Cosimo "Mimo" Muscogiuri, a New York trained chef, their culinary talents are world class, and dinner has you astonished that such food can be found on such a small island where it is difficult to buy a banana. Hot water has been added to all the rooms and the entire posada has a lovely white washed relaxed Mediterranean atmosphere, often with some gentle music in the background. Angelo's own paintings hang on the walls. It now provides the final touch to what I believe to be one of the finest fishing experiences on the planet today.



FACT: *The beauty of Los Roques is that there are no set entry and departure dates allowing you a much greater flexibility when working around office dates. With a wide choice of airline carriers flying via Europe and via the states, Venezuela is very straightforward to get to.*

www.aardvarkmcleod.com



An interview with Alistair Robjent, of Robjents Tackle, in Stockbridge who went to the Nordurá River in Iceland.

How easy is it travel to Iceland?

Easy – a quick drive to Heathrow, direct flight to Reykjavik on Iceland Air, and three hours later we arrived. It takes me longer than that to drive to Norfolk and see my father!

Which river did you fish?

The Nordurá River in north west Iceland. Approximately one hour and forty minutes by car from Reykjavik, the Nordurá is one of Iceland's top three rivers in terms of catch statistics, so I was pretty excited.

What was the food & accommodation like?

Fantastic. The food was unbelievable, close to a Michelin star restaurant. Every evening the chef would come out and introduce each course. The lodge was kept immaculate, rooms were cleaned every day and there was fresh linen on the beds. The typically Scandinavian lodge looks out over the river from on high with an incredible view of the falls.

What were the guides like?

These were some of the best quality guides I have had the pleasure to fish with. Even though some of them were young they were completely fishing obsessed and their technical knowledge was excellent... probably as they had been fishing from birth.

How did the techniques & tackle differ from fishing in Scotland?

Hugely. This was quite a steep learning curve, despite the amount of fishing I have done in the past. The water is so clear it teaches fishermen a large amount about salmon behaviour as you can see how they react to the fly. Light presentations on smaller rods, (I fished single handed with a 10ft 7 weight), find a fish, try a number of different flies over its lie, and often it would take after a number of changes in size and

colour. I also found that what would work for one fish would then be ignored by another, but something radically different would induce a take. It goes to show how many fish we cover in Scotland without even knowing it, and how the constant changing of flies can make the difference.

What were the numbers of fish like?

Even in a poor seasons where some rivers had no water at all Nordurá still produced good numbers. It does not tend to run out of water, and the canyon sections have deep holes. I caught 12 fish in four days fishing, but must have lost 20 or so on small flies. There were stacks of fish in the river, averaging between 4 – 9lbs, and more than enough going on to keep you on tenterhooks.

How does it compare to other salmon rivers?

I found it highly exciting. A bit like trout fishing for salmon. You can of course fish in the usual way and catch fish, but stalking fish is so exciting. I had at least four fish that actually broke the surface to inhale my riffle hitched fly as it waked over their heads.

What sort of fishermen would it suit?

To get the most out of this river I think it is preferable to be fit. There are many sections where it helps to be able to walk a bit to access interesting water. You also need to be open minded in your fishing attitude. The guides here are incredibly eager for you to catch fish, and they will use every trick in the book, including some that a traditional Scottish fishermen would think is unorthodox. The first one to get your head around is the riffled hitch which makes the fly swing across the surface creating a V-wake. This drives them nuts, but in the same pool you may use a large Snelder weighted tube fly. I think is also helps to be a reasonable caster, but that is the case whenever you are sight fishing.

Could you take a non – fisher?

The lodge is certainly comfortable enough for a non-fisher to pass the time. The lodge also has Wi Fi and a television with satellite. The rooms might be a little small for children though, and each room only has twin beds. I would also recommend a hire car to go out and explore the surrounding area where there is some truly stunning landscape.



Salmon Fishing 66° North

The Laxa I Adaldal is an enchanting gin clear river flowing from the heart of Iceland to the north coast, stopping just shy of the Arctic Circle, carving its way down an enormous glaciated valley. It is interrupted by a formidable hydro electric scheme that harnesses the natural power of the river. Laxa I Adaldal (also known as the Big Laxa) eventually ends its journey over an impressive sequence of waterfalls near the town of Husavik. Here the next run of salmon can be seen at the foot of a sheer cliff, as well as jumping in the bay. Possibly to be seen again in two to three days time on one of the impressive beats that this river has to offer.

Arness lodge is family owned and run by Arní Pétur Hilmarsson, who, along with his lodge staff and guides, made my stay an incredible experience. From half past six in the morning right through till midnight we were attentively catered for by this very personable bunch, which I feel is equally as important as the fishing on a holiday of this nature.

My guide, Krownie, was as fanatical and as excited as me about getting hold of a fish; a great indicator of a good guide; especially as he was half way through a season and into his seventh year guiding.

I had five and a half days fishing on Laxa I Adaldal, with 12 hour split shifts on a total of eight different beats; so no day went past without thinking you hadn't given it your all. Shoulders began to protest towards the end of the week due to wielding the 15 footer. This is where the 13 and 9 foot rod made fishing pleasurable again, along with the help of the hot tub in the evenings.

Conditions were not always easy with a strong northerly wind prevailing throughout most of the week; abnormal weather for this time of year. Therefore, every fish caught felt as though it was well deserved; especially considering that even when a fish is hooked, you must employ gorilla strength tactics to prevent the fish from reaching the lava strewn river bed – think heavy tapered leaders and no nonsense set drags. This is exceptionally exciting fishing.

Add to this the clarity of water and the willingness for fish to 'have a go', makes this one of the most exciting salmon fisheries I have been on. Fish straight from the sea are well known for being the keenest takers; and here in Iceland the fish are fresh from their feeding grounds and built with shoulders I would be proud of. These fish in turn still have the feeding instinct that some believe is the reason salmon take in fresh water. This theory could certainly be given weight judging by the most successful flies; Sunray shadows along with Black, Blue and Silvers. You could hardly get a fly that more closely resembles sand eels and bait fish.

Most of the fishing is on a floating line. This is simply magical after spring fishing in Scotland, where the nagging worry 'Am I getting deep enough?' is a constant refrain. Here on Adaldal you are fishing deep pools with surface fished flies and these immense cauldrons may hold many hundreds of fish. Any one of them has to commit from depth to take the fly.



FACT: Iceland is only a three hour flight from London or Glasgow allowing you to fly and fish the same day. The best time of year to fish is early July to late August on Laxa I Adaldal although other rivers such as Nordurá have a slightly longer season.

One of the most memorable days fishing I have ever had was on the Laxa this year. The day started with a personal best fish of 21lb. The fish gave a ferocious run downstream round a right angled bend, only Krownie holding the line out from the bankside vegetation on the inside of the bend made it possible to land it. The second six hour session in the afternoon would have to be seen to be believed; with between 15 and 20 follows from large fresh fish to 20lbs. Casting from a cliff for the most part, every fish was clearly seen coming to Sunrays and a variety of hitched flies. The thing that stuck in my mind was these fish were only attracted to surface fished flies, and anything offered at any depth was ignored. Just watching these magnificent fish coming from great depths to try for a fly was an incredible sight and right up there with catching these stunning creatures.

This river is a must fish for any fanatic of Atlantic salmon; with its deep, rich history of great anglers – it is where Iceland's largest fish was caught. It has all the vital ingredients of a great salmon river; heart in mouth excitement amongst jaw dropping scenery.





Tigers in Africa

John Craddock travelled to Impalila Island Lodge in search of tiger fish. Below is an extract from the report he sent us. You can read the full version on our website.

My first encounter with Tiger Fish was on Lake Nasser in Egypt in 2001 and finally, in July 2008 I was en route with three friends, (Martin, Stuart, and Gavin) to spend a few days pursuing tiger fish on the Zambezi. Here I was on a plane out of Johannesburg, flying 2,000 km north to Livingstone. An overnight stop in a tented safari camp, take in the spectacular rainbow majesty of the Victoria Falls, and out the following day to the Botswana border some two hours drive from Livingstone. Once through the formalities at the Botswana border, we arrived in Namibia, took a boat ride down the Chobe River to Impalila island, where we disembarked, hiked a few hundred metres through dust, rock, scrub and mopane bush to.....er.....wella large shed really! This was Immigration and inside a "Welcome to Impalila" with dusty old posters of native fish, birds and other wildlife stuck on the walls. Back on the boat we then had a 20 minute run to the lodge. Fish eagles, egrets, herons, pink coloured storks line the banks, and African kingfishers dart and hover along the edge.

Impalila Lodge sits among trees on the edge of a clear but weed-fringed backwater off the main river, and is dominated by a huge baobab tree, which appears to grow through the thatch. The pontoon had several aluminium boats tied up, all fitted with fast outboards, and the lodge itself had a laidback feel, with big comfy old chairs around the bar area. The rooms are cottages hidden away in the bush behind the lodge. All are en-suite, with verandah, mosquito netting on the doors and around the beds, and the occasional monkey swinging past outside.

I'd studied the information prior to coming, and decided that the gear I use at home was probably not suitable and didn't have the necessary oomph. I did have a large arbor reel which I use for trout but I needed an 8 weight fast sink line. (I hate fast sinkers as a rule). I bought a Courtland 8wt

fast sinker and loaded it onto the reel along with 150yds of 30lb backing. The rods I had at home weren't really suitable either but I bought an 8 wt 9' rod which was 4 piece, in other words suitcase sized. I took my own flies which were mostly streamers types, in an assortment of reds, oranges, whites, yellows, (these were recommended in the blurb) and included a few rabbit skin ones as well, also in various garish colours (one was bright purple).

The four of us divided into two boats and shot out of the channel and into the main river. The channels, some 70-80m wide and maybe two to three miles long criss-cross between the Chobe and Zambezi. It took me a while to realise that my guide was watching for bird activity along the edge. July sees the end of the rainy season, and during the flood fish spawn and thus the fry find protection in the marsh. As the river drops away, the marsh dries out, and the fry, in order to survive, have no choice but to enter the main river once again. There the tigers wait for them.

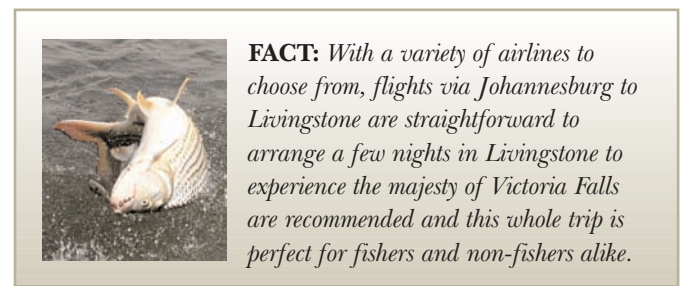
The depth along the edge of the bank varies from 10 to 15 ft and I was pleased to have my fast sinker. We tied on one of my flies, attaching it to a 6" wire trace first and in turn tying that to a 4' 12lb leader. It was 5.30pm on our first day, the sting had gone out of the sun, and hippos grunted and barked unseen in the reeds. Martin was the first to connect, and the fish was on for a matter of seconds before it let go. Me next, a sudden jerk, and again it was gone. Martin finally got into a fish and landed it, all muscle and the most beautiful pinky orange fins. The teeth are impressive and frightening. The tiger has a retractable jaw and is literally armed to the teeth. With the sun setting quickly we caught several more around the same size as darkness set in.

We compared notes back at the lodge and repeated the pattern for the next couple of days, developing a rota

between us to switch position periodically. Gavin finally hooked and landed his first ever tiger. As the sun rose, so the fishing became more spasmodic, and eventually Gavin handed his fly rod to Victor (our guide), sat back and opened a beer. His retrieve was appreciably slower than mine, and more purposeful.

We moved to a position by the bank which had a deep eddy, and with Victor clutching on to the hippo grass I adopted his style of line retrieval. This time I had given up on the oranges and reds, and found a larger black lure in his box. Immediately I hit into fish, and with hardly a blank cast between takes I hooked probably 30 fish, and landed 17. The majority were in the 1-2 lbs plus category, but two or three were around 5 lbs and were a hell of a handful on the 9' fly rod. The change of fly and change of retrieving style appeared to pay off, and my belief grew that the last hour or so of darkness was by far the best time. By the time we got back to the lodge it was dark, but Stuart, with his guide Robert caught a fantastic fish around the 11 lb mark on the fly, and Martin had also scored with a fine tiger of around 8.8 lbs.

The others went out the following morning.....our last day... but I decided instead to give it a miss and went to see the 2,000 year old baobab. The tree was frankly awe inspiring and had a 26 m (80 ft) circumference around the trunk. The others were arriving back and the three of them had made plans to go to a watering hole to watch the buffalo and giraffe coming down to drink, so with Robert as my guide I took off on my own. This time though I went armed with two large black lures I'd bought in the shop at the lodge - Tigerfish Deceivers. I had the fly of choice, and



FACT: With a variety of airlines to choose from, flights via Johannesburg to Livingstone are straightforward to arrange a few nights in Livingstone to experience the majesty of Victoria Falls are recommended and this whole trip is perfect for fishers and non-fishers alike.

I was fishing deep water using a varied retrieve. Just as I began to feel smug the reel handle smacked my knuckles and the backing burned my fingers. Sixty yards downstream and close to the bank a big tiger threw itself out of the water, went to my right like a torpedo, and using the current tore off downstream. It happened so quickly that it was fully five seconds before I reacted, and with arguably 75 yards of line out I tried to play the fish. The fish eventually tired and Robert landed it. Nicely hooked in the side of the mouth it dropped the scales at almost 11 lb 8oz.

Three casts later another big tiger leapt into the air about 30 yards below me. The slack loops of line at my feet took off through my fingers and the reel spun in a blur. Again I was 30-40 yds into the backing which I didn't dare touch, such was the speed of the reel, so I braked it on the outer part of the drum. Winding in the slack as fast I as I could manage I connected properly with the fish. Again came those lurching runs and suddenly it was under the rod tip and directly under the boat taking off towards the opposite bank. The strength of these fish is immense, and the boat was turned 180 degrees across the current. Robert deftly netted it and weighed this one in at 9 lbs 8 oz. The fly was tattered and had lost most of its body with these two fish, and at 5.30 pm, the sun dropping quickly toward the horizon, I'd had enough.

With my last cast, it was by now almost dark, I let all the line out and perhaps 15 yds or more of backing. The line straightened out below me, and I had no idea exactly where it was, but I had barely begun the retrieve when there was an almighty take. The line was bowed in a 60 yd U shape and the fish powered upstream. I reeled in like a maniac, and caught up with it. There was nothing, absolutely nothing I could do to try and halt this runaway train or even remotely bring it under control. On and on it went, 50, 60, 70 yards, and I was absolutely desperate to get the fly line back on the spool. In the gloom I could only feel the direction it took as it shook its head on the run, and I felt like I'd been subjected to a series of electric shocks which ran up the line, down the rod, and into my arms and shoulders. I applied more and more pressure once I had the fly line back on the reel. Eventually Robert eased the net under it - it was so dark by now, we had to use a torch to see the weight, and it clunked down at 16 lbs 2 oz. In a little over 90 minutes I'd had three fish of a lifetime. Returning it gently, we upped anchor and left. This had proved to be an expedition which had exceeded my wildest expectations.

Atlantic Salmon on the Dry Fly

The Gaspé peninsular and New Brunswick areas in Canada have for a hundred years been the focus of North America's Atlantic salmon fishing, and with good reason. The high water temperature on the East coast has resulted in the genetic strain of salmon becoming aggressive in attacking surface flies. In Gaspé there are the unique crystal clear waters of the Bonaventure and the tea coloured water of the fabled Grand Cascapedia. In New Brunswick just below Gaspé there is the Miramichi river system. Both of these fisheries are unique, and fish here will readily take a dry fly. Hooking salmon on dry fly is probably the highlight of my salmon fishing career as it is breathtakingly exciting.

The Bonaventure and the Grand Cascapedia

Next season we will be offering fishing on these rivers based from Camp Bonaventure and Salmon Lodge. Both lodges fish both rivers, and you will access numerous beats on both. Camp Bonaventure was built in 1995 with all modern conveniences down to free wireless broadband throughout. The lawn fronts the river, and the service and guides are incredibly professional. Salmon Lodge on the other hand provides a real feel of history. This one hundred year old lodge has been refurbished inside without losing its charm or tradition. It nestles on a bluff overlooking the large meandering bend of the Grand Cascapedia.

The Bonaventure is gin clear and wading across it the salmon are instantly visible, almost suspended in air. Guides even carry periscopes that allow you to see many of the fish in the pool. It is an extraordinary experience to be able to cast a dry fly at fish up to 30 lbs and witness their every movement in response to the fly. When the river is higher at the beginning of the season it is possible to use a canoe to drift down the river, fishing as you go. The Grand Cascapedia offers the chance of a large fish as some up to 40 lbs are caught every year. Although the water is tea coloured it is still clear. It will also be possible to combine the two lodges for a week. The clear water fishing and the fabulous food and service offer a unique salmon fishing experience.

The Miramichi and its tributaries

The Miramichi is steeped in history and tradition dating back over a hundred years, and has always been fly only water. Generations of guides have plied their trade on the river, with many of the same names appearing for the third generation. There are seven major tributaries off the main river, each one providing a completely different fishing experience and environment to catch Atlantic salmon. Some are like Scottish rivers, meandering quietly through the trees and some carve their way through rocks and canyons. Fish of over 50 lbs have been landed this season, so there are some very large fish in the system. The main river itself offers some extraordinary fishing opportunities based from either Country Haven Lodge on the Main Southwest arm or at Upper Oxbow Lodge on the Little Southwest.

Country Haven Lodge is a typical Canadian cedar log lodge overlooking the river, and for those wishing for a more intimate experience has some two and three bedroom cabins further along the river front. These can be catered from the lodge or privately. The lodge itself has 11 private pools on the river system all reached easily by vehicle, and leases with our partners Salar Enterprise a number of others making a total of some 25 pools on the main river. Many of the pools on the Miramichi are between 200 – 500 yards long, so they will take you a full session to fish. You also have access to the Cains River, one of the principal tributaries and particularly known for its fall run.

Upper Oxbow Lodge has some rustic cabins, but also a fabulous modern lodge complete with hotel style rooms, downstairs pool room and bar, and a beautiful salmon pool right in front of the lodge. The lodge sits on the Little Southwest River, a very productive tributary with very different scenery from the main river. The Little South West flows through a more mountainous area that is more akin to the West Coast of Canada. The Sevogle River system nearby is another fascinating tributary.



FACT: The East Coast of Canada is easily reached by either flying 5 hours to Fredericton or 6 hours to Montreal and connecting to Gaspé or Moncton. It will be possible to fish combination

packages between the two lodges in each area allowing a greater variety of water and increase the chances of catching a salmon.

Bass glorious Bass

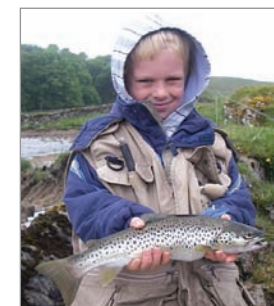
The one species that every fisherman wants to catch, but so few people really know how to do it properly. Bass – just the word is enough to send a tingle down the spine. Big predator eyes, stunning silver flanks and a real sporting proposition.



This is some of the most exciting, heart-stopping fishing in Europe. We are now in the position to offer fully guided, modern bass

fishing around the Irish coastline, with possibly the most frenetic, energetic and passionate fisherman there is, Henry Gilbey. Together with his bass-mad sidekick Graham Hill, join Henry for guided bass fishing clinics where the emphasis is on having as much fun as you can get out of fishing. Learn the true art of catching these outrageously stunning fish from beaches, estuaries, rocks and gullies, using whatever methods the conditions dictate, and on one of the most deserted coastlines imaginable. High octane, ultra-modern lure fishing, ages-old reflective surf fishing plus fly fishing when the sea is right, bass fishing is all about passion, energy and excitement. Let Henry and Graham take you on a proper fishing adventure.

FACT: Henry Gilbey will be personally hosting three trips to Ireland next year in search of bass. Guests will fly into Waterford, which will allow plenty of flexibility for flights from London, Manchester and Birmingham and as soon as the dates are confirmed in October, we will let everyone know. This will be a fantastic opportunity to fish with Henry for a species he is so passionate about.



WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST FISH?

Tom's was a monster salmon, Max's a wild brown trout. Your first fish, regardless of what age you are is an unforgettable experience.

There are some fantastic destinations for fishermen who want to travel with their families and along with Belize, Canada and the US mid-west are ideal for families. There is great fishing for the fishermen and plenty to do for the rest of the family including hiking, mountain biking, horse riding or even just some light shopping. Most importantly, both Canada and the US mid-west are great in July and August; a perfect escape for the long school holidays.

BELIZE... *the answer to the fisherman's dilemma*

What is a fisherman's biggest dilemma? Not always 'What fly? What rod? What line?' It's often uttering those words 'Darling, I want to go fishing'. Reactions vary but there can't be many fishermen who haven't experienced a frosty response. If going away fishing on your own isn't an option, finding somewhere to take your wife, partner or family and still have some good fishing can be difficult. Charlotte spent three weeks in Belize in January and believes it could be the answer to that thorny dilemma.



Belize ticks all the boxes – fantastic fishing combined with a wide enough choice of lodges and activities to keep the entire family happy.

It is one of the most diverse fisheries in the Caribbean; with abundant species twinned with a huge variety of saltwater habitats. Ambergris Cay in the north is home to prime migratory tarpon fishing from the end of June to the beginning of September. These giant silver kings have fishermen flocking from Florida as they have the opportunity to fish in similar water with far fewer people around. Further out, in the Turneffe atoll tailing bonefish and permit can be stalked on wadeable coral flats. The inner lagoon harbours further permit and tarpon grounds with crystal clear areas bordered by mangroves.



Fishing in Belize is fantastic but is not all that Belize has to offer. Yes, there are some excellent hard core fishing lodges but they aren't necessarily going to make you popular with your partners or families.

What Belize does have are lodges where you can combine great fishing and excellent guides with superb accommodation and a wide variety of activities. These range from family run lodges and five star hotels on Ambergris Cay to tree houses and ocean-side spas on the coast in Dangriga. Inland, the cloud forests are home not only to beautiful orchids but to lodges with jacuzzis on the patio looking over the rainforest below. The vast majority of the lodges have spa facilities either in the grounds or very close by and all of them have a wide range of non-fishing activities to choose.



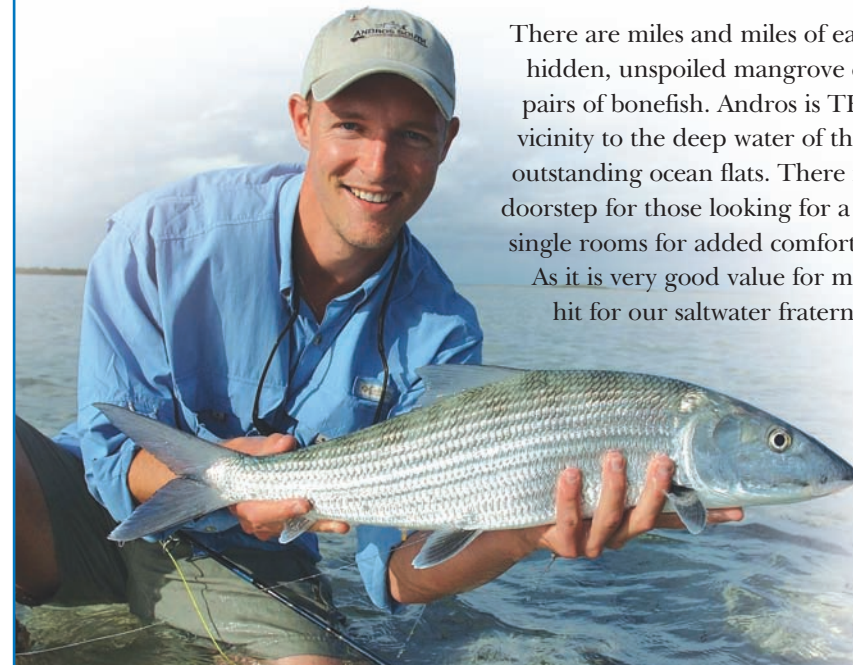
You cannot beat scuba diving along the coast and discovering the wonderful underwater world of the Belizean reefs. PADI registered dive outfits operate out of all the lodges and this is a great place to learn to dive. If you don't fancy diving, snorkelling is easily arranged. Whether hiking, horse riding, canoeing, sailing, wind surfing, exploring the mysterious Mayan ruins, caving or just chilling out on the beach, there is plenty for everyone.



FACT: *If, in addition to great fishing, you need to find a quiet retreat with spa facilities, a lodge where small children can play safely and teenagers kept occupied both day and night – head to Belize; there is something for everyone. With flights via Miami, Belize City is straightforward to get to. English is widely spoken and getting around the country easy enough using one of the two internal airlines.*

Big Bones in the Bahamas

Andros Island has been synonymous with large bonefish since the days of the first Crazy Charlie, and recently a new operation emerged located in Kemps Bay on Southern Andros. Andros South offers a breath of fresh air as it is a fishing lodge, pure and simple. The focus of the operation is just on fishing, and the guides and staff there are just as obsessed as you are. Andros Island itself is riddled with innumerable tidal creeks and inland flats, all home to thousands of hungry bonefish.



There are miles and miles of easily-waded white sand flats as well as hidden, unspoiled mangrove creeks peppered with large big singles and pairs of bonefish. Andros is THE place to hunt big bonefish as the close vicinity to the deep water of the "Tongue of the Ocean" provides outstanding ocean flats. There is also an excellent offshore fishery on the doorstep for those looking for a little variety. Accommodation is based on single rooms for added comfort, and the lodge is clean and comfortable.

As it is very good value for money we know that this operation will be a hit for our saltwater fraternity looking for great bonefishing.

FACT: *Andros is easily reached by direct flight on British Airways to Nassau and then a short hop to Congo Town on South Andros.*



ICELAND'S BEST KEPT SECRET



Iceland is always associated with salmon fishing, but what is not so well known is the country also has some of the finest wild brown trout fishing in Europe. We have recently gained exclusive access to the trout fishing beats on the Upper Laxa I Adaldal, a very famous salmon river in its own right. These beats have only been fished up to this point by a lucky few who have very much kept it quiet. Only fourteen rods are available and in the past access to this river, as a non-Icelandic, was only possible if you had the right contacts.

The Upper Adaldal is teeming with big, aggressive wild brown trout. In a truly spectacular setting, this lake fed river flows initially in many braided channels widening as it descends through the valley. The diverse habitats provide anglers with some very varied fishing. It is possible to fish upstream or downstream, but some of the best results come from fishing upstream with tiny size 16 midge imitations. The tiniest kiss of the surface as the fly is sucked down can suddenly have you attached to 5 lb wild fish with Viking like tendencies! You may even find your fly being ambushed by a passing salmon. With approximately 30 km of river, there are nine beats which are split into morning and afternoon sessions.

Accommodation is a purpose built lodge overlooking the upper river. Although not luxurious, it is warm and comfortable and a perfect environment in which to relax after a long day in the river.