

Fish Tails...

It seems that over the last six months the saltwater fly fishing arena has very much focused on the Indian Ocean, but I feel it is important to emphasise that it is a big world out there and many of our other top venues such as Los Roques in Venezuela and Cuba continue to fish extremely well. It has become apparent in our ever increasing search to find new and exciting places to go fishing that some hotspots are being overlooked or have become unfashionable despite the fact that they are still producing consistently good fishing. One such destination is Christmas Island which we will be revisiting this year.

Our thirst for new areas of the globe and new species to target on the fly will never be quenched and that is one of the reasons we do what we do. With that in mind we have a team just back from the Brazilian Amazon having fished a new peacock bass destination. Primarily aimed towards fly fishing rather than other operations in the area, for those thinking of attending the World Cup in 2014 or the Olympics in 2016 this will be the ideal add on.

On the freshwater side we are developing new fisheries on Tierra Del Fuego with our TDF Explorer and Navarino programmes for those looking for an adventure. In response to enquiries for multi species fishing in Iceland and an ever increasing demand for sea trout and trout fishing we have created some exciting new combinations that now push our Iceland season into September.

As our small team expands in response to our continued growth we continue to provide the personal service, accessibility and knowledge that we hope will make Aardvark McLeod your number one choice for international fishing travel. I hope this spring newsletter will give you some interesting ideas for the forthcoming season, and we look forward to being of service soon.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Peter McLeod".

Jungle Fever

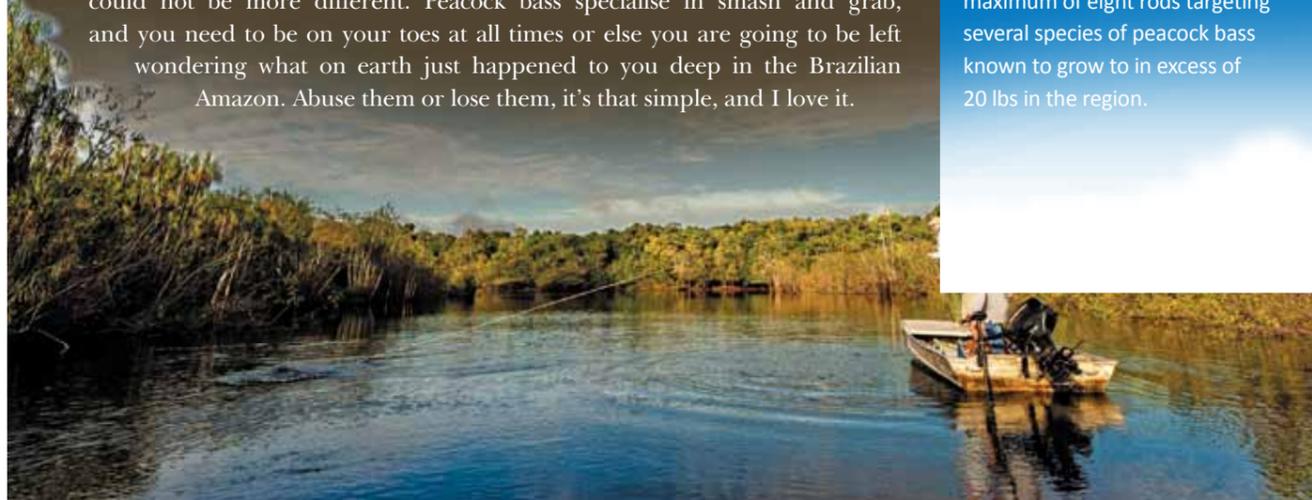
Four flights, various airports, at least halfway around the world and a fish that I have been dreaming about photographing for years is now in front of my lens. Wow these fish are something serious, in fact they are everything I had hoped they might be and more. You hear the stories, see some photos and read a few articles, but nothing can really prepare you for the whole remote jungle experience where you spend a week on the banks of a stunning, wild and gorgeously warm river that is quite literally crawling with fish. A lot of these fish rather like smashing into your flies with the kind of ferocity that at times can leave you close to tears as some unseen monster pops your leader with an ease more usually associated with saltwater fish...

I don't know what more to say about peacock bass other than they are just an awesome fish. Their awesomeness if you like is greatly enhanced by the fact that the best fly fishing for them is of course in those wonderfully remote corners of the globe that take a bit of getting to. The Brazilian rainforest has many different places where you can go and fish for peacock bass, but you really want to be fishing the remotest and least-pressurised waters with the very best fly fishing guides in South America. You want to live comfortably but at the same time really get a true sense of being in the middle of a vast ocean of trees that goes on and on into the distance. With this new peacock bass fishing venture you get the lot.

If you come from trout fishing then you're going to be in for one life enhancing shock as you put that fly out right in amongst the structure that is found all along the banks of the river and its many, many lagoons. Sometimes you will be halfway through that first strip and already a peacock bass has literally snatched your fly up and gone right back into a festering mass of tree roots before you, the angler, has actually registered what on earth has happened. Living in the jungle on a fishing trip like this is the most incredibly relaxing and peaceful experience. The actual fishing could not be more different. Peacock bass specialise in smash and grab, and you need to be on your toes at all times or else you are going to be left wondering what on earth just happened to you deep in the Brazilian Amazon. Abuse them or lose them, it's that simple, and I love it.



January 2013 welcomed the first ever group into the Warekena floating camp. This is a fly fishing only camp fishing virtually untouched reaches of the Amazon rainforest. Fishing is for a maximum of eight rods targeting several species of peacock bass known to grow to in excess of 20 lbs in the region.



Camp Bonaventure & Salmon Lodge

When thinking of Atlantic salmon the East coast of Canada is not the first destination that springs to mind, yet for over one hundred years it has been the best kept secret in North America. There is one operation that surpasses all others in this area and has stunning lodges on both the Bonaventure River and the fabled Grand Cascapedia. The owner Glenn LeGrand, is one of those extraordinary men where NOTHING is ever too much trouble, and I have to say that the service from his guides and staff is second to none.

I was simply stunned by the extraordinary beauty of the crystal clear Bonaventure River, and to top it off the prime method is dry fly fishing with bombers which is perhaps the most exciting way to catch salmon. You can swing flies with a small two hander or if you are feeling adventurous fish upstream dry fly and actually watch each wiggle of a fin as the fly drifts over a pod of salmon. The Bonaventure also contains some very large fish, although for fish over 25 lbs it would be better to head over to the Grand Cascapedia only 25 minutes away and both rivers are fished by the lodges.

Camp Bonaventure is a relatively new lodge with all modern conveniences down to wireless broadband throughout. Salmon Lodge on the other hand provides a real feel of history. This one hundred year old lodge has just been refurbished inside and out without losing its charm or tradition. It nestles on a bluff overlooking the large meandering bend of the Grand Cascapedia and while you look over the river from the deck during the evening you will positively feel the aura of those who have come before you. Space is in high demand from returning clients so if you fancy trying your hand at these historic rivers, please don't delay getting in touch.



The season runs from the beginning of June through until the end of September with the large fresh salmon pushing through as soon as the ice breaks, not unlike Russia. Prime dry fly time is July into August, but the fishing in September on both rivers can be extraordinary as by then fish numbers have built up over the course of the season. This is particularly appealing as September is always an odd month to find somewhere that is fishing well.





There was a time when saltwater anglers flocked across the Pacific Ocean in droves to experience the phenomenon that is Christmas Island (also known as Kiritimati). It is a veritable feast of giant sand flats with azure drop offs patrolled by the bulldogs of the ocean, GTs. It was the original saltwater destination. While the fishing community's focus moved to new destinations opening in Mexico, Belize, Venezuela, Cuba and the Indian Ocean, Christmas Island continued to produce fantastic fishing. It is where GTs were first hunted with fly rods, triggerfish first targeted, and coupled with an incredible bluewater fishery, has kept the faithful returning year on year in an annual pilgrimage.

CHRISTMAS ISLAND *GT tastic!*

Christmas Island is located 1200 miles south of Hawaii, offers over 250 square miles of saltwater habitat and is the largest atoll in the world. Like Venezuela it is extremely close to the equator making it a year round fishery with a very stable climate. Aside from the large schools of bonefish feeding on the white sand flats, the fishery offers a huge array of species such as GTs, golden, blue and striped trevally, triggerfish, barracuda, tuna, wahoo and also milkfish which are there in numbers. Christmas Island is also one of the few wading destinations, that many prefer.

For the coming season we will be working with the latest and most comfortable operation on the island at Ikari Lodge. Run by Jacob Teem the modern lodge is a cut above the rest offering cold beer, hot water on demand, clean rooms, nice beds, and very good food. About as good as it gets in the middle of the Pacific. The guide team are some of the most experienced on the island knowing the fishery intimately and willing to push it as hard as the fishermen. To top it all off the lodge is located right where the boats are moored to prevent unnecessary driving time. Jacob is the only operator on the island with fibreglass boats in two different sizes in his armoury allowing entry to areas of the lagoon seldom accessed. The larger of the two sizes sporting 300 hp engines have also opened up a whole part of the island that can now be accessed by boat rather than a long drive across the island.

The island is reached by flying to Honolulu via Los Angeles with a brief overnight in Honolulu before the Tuesday Air Pacific 737 service to Christmas Island. Yes, it is on the other side of the world BUT it is also some of the best value saltwater fishing anywhere in the world. For someone obsessed with catching giant trevally on the fly then this is one destination that you need to tick off your list.



Peter will be hosting a group to the new operation on Christmas Island at the end of October this year. If you would like to join this saltwater adventure then please contact him as space will be limited.

Norway: Salmon in 2013

For a salmon fisherman there are several places that you must experience in your lifetime; the crystal clear waters of Gaspé, the grilse runs of Iceland, the wilds of the Kola Peninsula and the giants of Norway. With catches of salmon exceeding 40 lbs regularly gracing the pages of its catch records, we are delighted to be able to offer space in Norway on many of its rivers including Lakselv, Reisa, Malselv and Gaula.



The Lakselv River is the closest anyone gets to fishing the magical and famous Alta River, both in geographical terms as well as catching a big one. Lakselv has been known as a big salmon river for generations and its reputation has increased during the last decade. This is a place to enjoy first class fly water, the flavours of the high Arctic and the excitement of testing your fishing skills against one of these elusive and mysterious specimens – Atlantic salmon exceeding 40 lbs in weight!

The Reisa offers a rare opportunity to fish a river that combines the best qualities and features of other Norwegian rivers all in comfortable distance of one lodge. The lower parts offer superb fishing with inviting 200 yard pools and good wading conditions, a place for classic fly fishing. The upper part, with the spectacular scenic

canyon and cascading waterfalls, offers a different approach; guides beach their riverboats allowing you to target likely salmon lies. This river sees Atlantic salmon of over 50 lbs caught most seasons.

The Malselv is a salmon river in the same class as Reisa and Lakselv. It is formed when the tributaries Divi River and Rosta River meet, and it flows into the sea at Malsnes at the bottom of the Malselv Fjord, the large river is perfectly suited to classic salmon fly fishing. The Malselv River Trust has helped this river to maintain consistent catches of large Norwegian salmon and has the potential to evolve in to one of the great rivers of Norway.

The Gaula needs little introduction; it is ranked as one of Europe's finest salmon rivers and offers both quantity and quality of salmon. One of the few rivers in the world where your next cast might result in a 40 lbs salmon, the Gaula has fish averaging between 14 and 16 lbs in weight.

Is it now time to experience Norwegian salmon fishing for yourself?

Jason Bowen, of Grangers Fishing Tackle, is hosting a group to the Malselv River 13-20 July 2013.

The Norwegian season runs from July to August with prime time generally considered as July.

Flights are relatively inexpensive and run a regular schedule making travelling to Norway comparatively simple.



WILD BROWN Trout

Alex and Charles Jardine venture north in pursuit of Iceland's biggest brown trout

The upper reaches of the Laxa I Adaldal is somewhere that you cannot help but tell everyone about after you have waded its waters and cast at its fish. From the fish that got away, to the fish that rose just out of reach and not forgetting the fish that you have landed. The memories of this river and those who make their livelihood from it remain deeply engrained in your mind and heart, enticing you to visit once more.

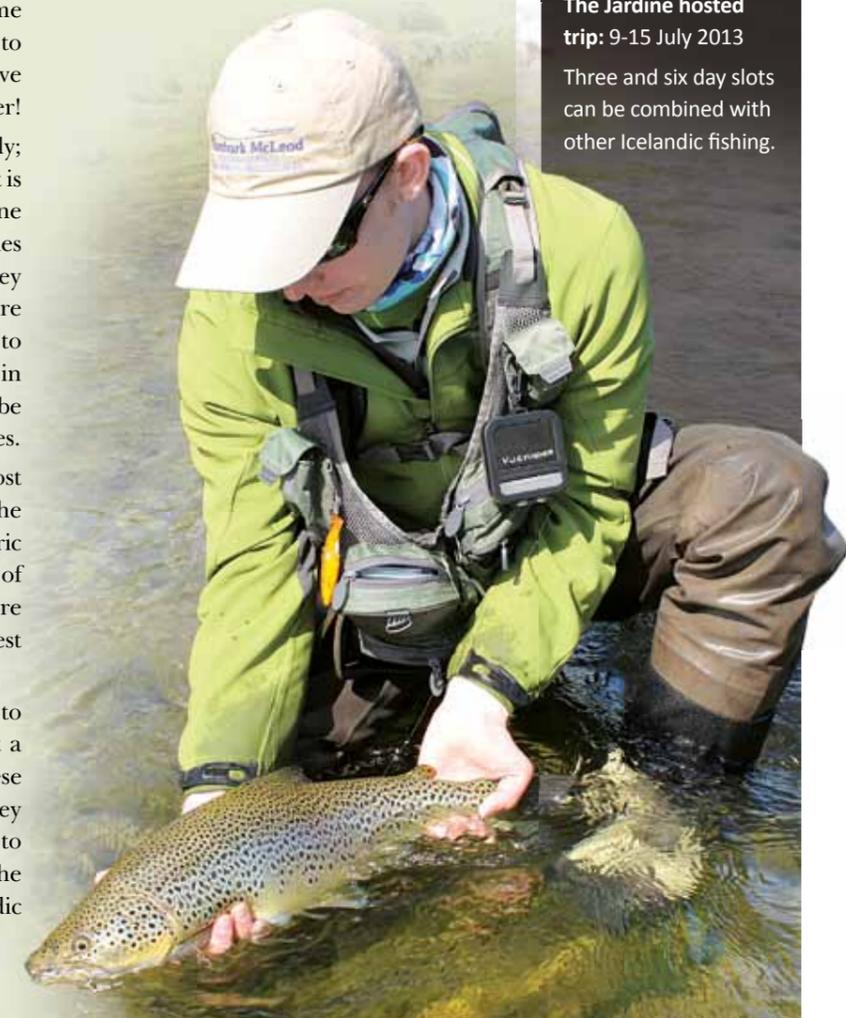
I have the great pleasure in returning to the Laxardal beats this summer along with my father, Charles Jardine, and a group of trout-minded fishermen. For me this is a chance to really capitalise on the lessons learnt last time and to discover new and successful ways to deceive these wonderful brown trout, I have already been at the fly tying bench this winter!

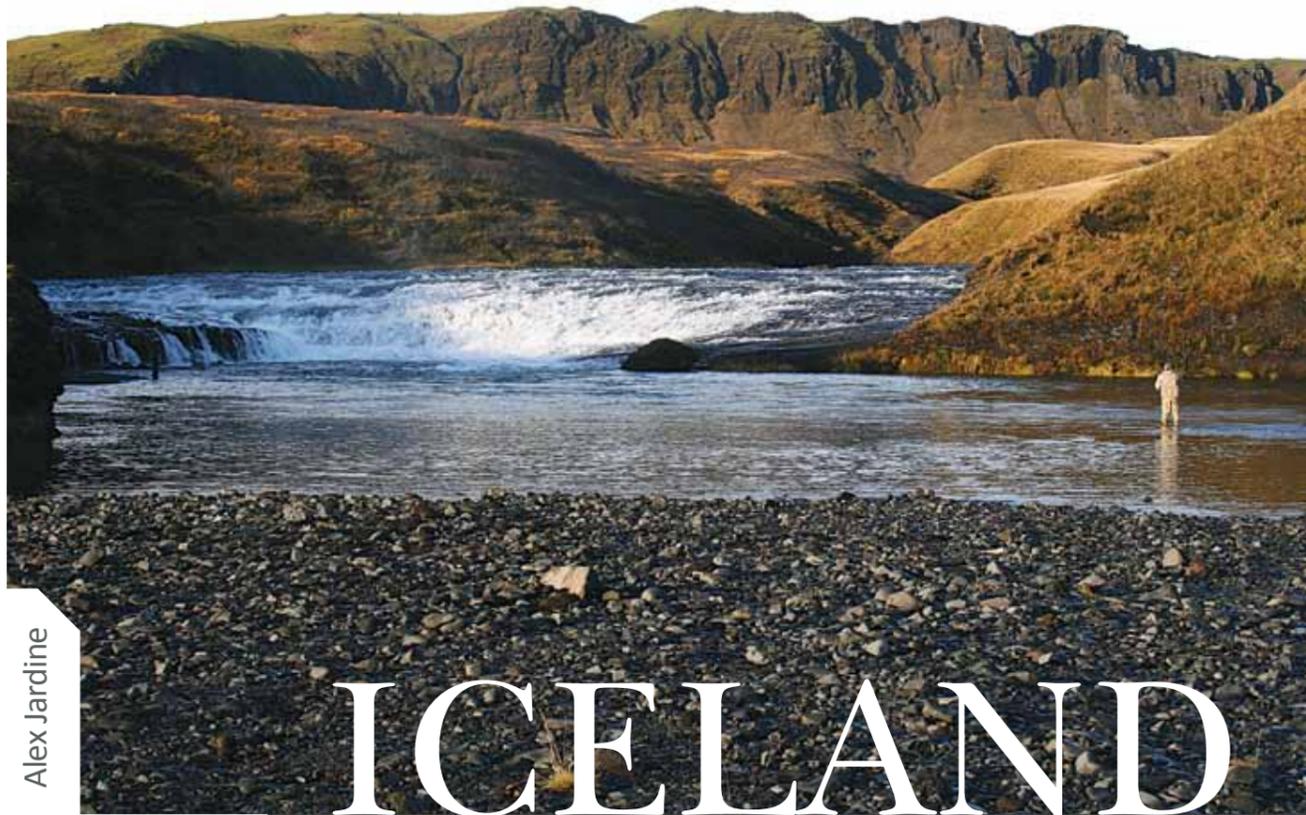
We will be heading to the river in mid-July; this is a prime time for dry fly fishing in what is a relatively short season. Starting in early June and closing at the end of August brownies have a very short feeding season and they certainly make the most of it. These fish are free rising and offer a marvellous spectacle to mid-summer fishermen, as the waters calm in the midnight twilight huge brown trout can be observed head and tail rising to small midges. This section of river has some of the most incredible brown trout anywhere in the world. The strain dates back to prehistoric times and their nature displays every inch of their determination to survive. The fish here average 4-5 lbs and are some of the strongest trout I have encountered.

Our hosted trip will not only be a chance to fish in this northern region of Iceland but a chance to experience the ways in which these trout behave and how to catch them. They may have the home advantage but we hope to show the chinks in their armour so all in the group can leave with their own big Icelandic brown trout.



The Jardine hosted trip: 9-15 July 2013
Three and six day slots can be combined with other Icelandic fishing.





Alex Jardine

ICELAND

plenty more fish



Laxá I Asum

An exciting combination that we will be starting this year is a week long trip for two to seven rods to fish for salmon, trout and char. This is a unique opportunity to be based at one lodge and fish three sections of the Laxá I Asum from the estuary to the upper river exclusively for one group.

Iceland has proudly boasted excellent and well documented salmon fishing for decades. It has a reputation for world class trout fishing but look beyond this – there is plenty more on offer.

The sea trout fishing in Iceland can offer unbelievable sport with many rivers averaging 5-8 lb fish with double figure fish not uncommon. Generally considered in its prime in early June and September, large runs can be experienced on a good number of rivers. The fishing techniques combine the traditional down and across method along with intriguing upstream nymphing styles.

This season we are offering some fantastic sea trout river combination packages that allow you to fish two very different rivers in the space of a week. We are most excited about the Tungufjot and Eldvatnsbotnar combination offering both large fly swinging water and more intricate nymphing water.

Iceland also has large runs of sea run char and these can make for an excellent addition to a trout or salmon trip. These fish generally average 2-4 lbs and offer fantastic sport with aggressive takes and energetic fights. This impressively marked fish is also the choice for making the Icelandic delicacy of Graflax, a dish you will certainly encounter during a stay in Iceland.

Looking for something different? Iceland has plenty more fish and there has never been a better time to go and experience all that this destination has to offer.

Steffan Jones

Conquer the Kola

40 lbs+ salmon or 40+ salmon?



Russia is vast both in terms of landmass but also in terms of the fishing opportunities, especially when the barren tundra of the Kola Peninsula is explored. The monotony of the tundra soon gives way to some of the finest Atlantic salmon rivers in the world, some no wider than a highland spate river with others commanding the same respect as the mighty Tay. No matter what you favour the Kola Peninsula should provide and make for a most memorable experience.



The rivers and to an extent the anglers on the Kola Peninsula can be split into two distinct categories; there are rivers that hold smaller numbers of salmon but provide the opportunity of a specimen of over 30 lbs or even 40 lbs. Then there are rivers that are abound with salmon, but rarely reach over 20 lbs. This can be one of the first decisions to make; size or quantity and this is where two camps of anglers emerge.

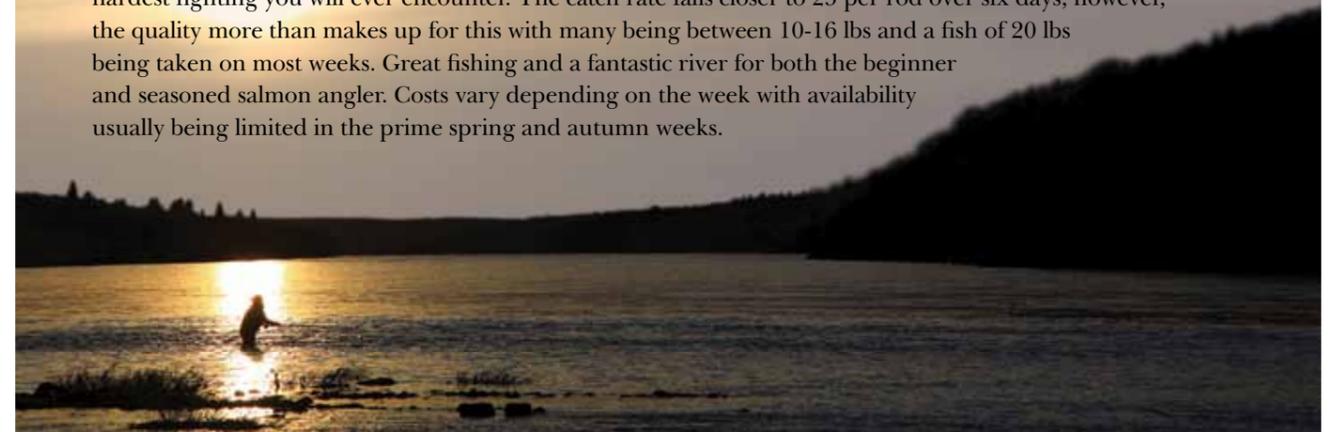
Secondly, the time of year to visit should be considered, which can differ considerably from river to river. Some peak in June, others in September with most offering very different experiences almost from week to week. For example early June may call for fast sinking lines and heavy, bright flies yet just two weeks later and fish will gladly explode on the surface to a skated bomber. Some rivers just have a spring/

summer run, whereas some are fortunate enough to have both a spring and autumn run. Beyond that you have a dozen or so rivers to choose from, so a lot to take into account before finding the perfect match.

Thankfully we have something to cover most requirements and budgets. Should you choose the chance of a specimen then there are the Kola, Varzina, Kharlovka or Yokanga rivers that offer individual appeal. Here fish of over 30 lbs are taken on most weeks and salmon of over 40 lbs are hooked, but can often prove to be too powerful an adversary.

For those seeking fish up to the 20 lbs mark there is the Uмба river along with the Grand Varzuga as great options to consider, both providing great sport in pristine surroundings on some of the best fly water to be found anywhere. Great value for prime weeks.

Finally there is the queen of the Kola, the Ponoj River. Spring weeks produce around 40 salmon per rod over six days with many of these fish being between 8-12 lbs – great sporting fish and a great place to learn the art of salmon fishing as many more are hooked and lost. Then you have the autumn fresh run fish that are among the hardest fighting you will ever encounter. The catch rate falls closer to 25 per rod over six days, however, the quality more than makes up for this with many being between 10-16 lbs and a fish of 20 lbs being taken on most weeks. Great fishing and a fantastic river for both the beginner and seasoned salmon angler. Costs vary depending on the week with availability usually being limited in the prime spring and autumn weeks.



Steffan Jones

sea trout Nirvana but so much more

For those who love their sea trout fishing Tierra Del Fuego (TDF) is an unparalleled 'must visit' destination. Unquestionably, the sea trout of TDF are unbeatable in terms of size and numbers. Nowhere else in the world can you go with a reasonable expectation of a 20 lbs+ sea trout and where 30 lbs+ fish are caught each season, but TDF offers a lot more than just sea trout.

If you want variety we now have exclusive access to the recently refurbished Cameron Lodge on the Chilean side of the Rio Grande. Cameron Lodge offers access to over 60 km of the Rio Grande along with other rivers and lakes nearby that hold sea trout as well as brown, rainbow and brook trout, a sprinkling of steelhead and king salmon. All of this from one lodge set alongside stunning vistas of the Andean mountain range and a landscape rich in nature. Here the Rio Grande holds a greater gradient too, which makes for interesting runs and riffles to explore at your leisure. With six anglers per week, each having single rooms as standard, that is an average of 10km of river per angler. Furthermore at US\$4,500 per person including transfers and licences it offers fantastic value for money.

Needless to say with tributaries such as the Menendez entering downstream on the Argentine side, Cameron Lodge is not for those who purely want to target sea trout in large numbers. For this there are much stronger options available from the legendary and the revered lodges that have welcomed sea trout anglers for decades. These are located on the middle and lower Rio Grande on the Argentine side. We have been selling and representing Kau Tapen and Villa Maria Lodges for years and they have never failed to produce the goods both from a service and comfort perspective through to the fishing and their enviable guide teams.

Their success is reflected in their availability where a prime week needs to be secured in the spring as it will not exist in the autumn. Cost of a week at either lodge is US\$7,250 plus fishing licence.

Beyond this we are proud to now represent and have access to both Estancia Maria Behety (EMB) properties. Located on the middle and lower Rio Grande these lodges offer the pinnacle of what the river has to offer in terms of sea trout fishing coupled with comfortable lodges overlooking and within easy reach of the Rio Grande valley. Cost for a week at EMB is US\$5,795 or US\$6,095 at La Villa EMB, including transfers and licences.



We now offer the largest destination and knowledge base for South American fishing in the UK and are constantly striving to unearth hidden gems. Whether it be TDF, Patagonia, Bolivia or Brazil please put us to the test.

mail@aardvarkmcleod.com



Gordon Richmond



Bolivian *Gold*

Since its inaugural season back in 2009 the founders of the Tsimane programme in the Bolivian jungle certainly haven't rested on their laurels and have kept pushing the boundaries of these wilderness programmes both in Bolivia and now in Brazil.

If you haven't read or seen images about the dorado fishing on the rivers in the Bolivian rainforest over the last few years then you haven't picked up a fishing magazine! The operation really did take the fishing travel world by storm breaking through boundaries and bringing us something totally unique with unparalleled charm, appeal and mysticism. It really did bring out the explorer in us and brought us an adventure like no other.

Tsimane continues to thrive and the knowledge they have gained over the last few seasons has given them a greater understanding of the fish, the area and the river systems and their individual intricacies. This has led to further exploration with some exciting new out camps launched for 2013, taking a maximum of two to four anglers at a time, depending on the camp chosen. It is ideal for groups of friends looking for a greater sense of remoteness and adventure whilst also being among the first to explore these newly accessed watercourses.

The main Tsimane lodges are US\$7,600 with the season running April to October, and the out camps are US\$5,000. The two options dovetail together well in June to October with a discount of US\$500 given for the combination.

www.aardvarkmcleod.com

Milkfish *on the fly?*



I have often wondered how you ‘trick’ a fish that exists on algae and plankton into taking a fly. What kind of fly would they take? They aren’t predators in the accepted sense (have you ever seen fast swimming algae?) – so what would entice them to take a fly? Luck? Skill? A bit of both?

While the number of milkfish landed on the fly worldwide remains relatively small by comparison to other species, Alphonse and St Francois are streaks ahead of the competition as the most consistent producer of landed milkfish on the fly. Why? It is due to the

experienced guide team, the number of fish and the correct topographic environment in which to target them. The early part of the Alphonse season has seen a remarkable number of milkfish landed so you can be forgiven for thinking that it is not the tough job it is made out to be. Don’t be fooled – it is not easy and once hooked, the fight is intense. If you want to pit your skill (and your luck) and join what is still an exclusive club, Alphonse is THE place to do it.

I had hooked and lost a milkfish last December so had some idea of their power. I soon realised how much of a teaser that had been when I was fortunate enough to land two of these powerful, untiring fish. I cannot adequately express the relief I felt when that first beautiful fish came to the boat. My arms were dead, my fingers hurt and I never wanted to see my backing again. The battle had seemed endless (actually mercifully short at 30 minutes), but that milkfish – my first – will forever remain with me. When netted, the sheer

power in that body was extraordinary and it was all I could do to hang on to the fish while the proof of my 35 lb prize was gathered.

The second, in somewhat ‘inclement’ weather was much tougher to land. Winding uphill at one point, with three aerial displays and having nearly been spooled twice, it was scooped up in 75 minutes and a bit of huffing and puffing later. I deny all rumours of girly squeaking but freely accept that I had to ask Roger to hold the fish because my hand wasn’t big enough to go around the wrist.

I return to Alphonse in December and if you too would like to pit your skills against the milkfish along with a host of other species, please contact us for details. My 9# and I are ready for battle.



Although not offering full ‘resort’ style facilities, Alphonse is ideal for non-fishers who will enjoy the simplicity and tranquillity of a beautiful Indian Ocean island. Next season will see more change including diving and the refurbished villas as an option.

