

A First-Hand Report On Kamchatka by Daniel Carpenter.

For many years, I read stories about fishing in exotic locales, and I promised to take such a trip myself one day. I vowed that it would be something worthy of envy amongst my buddies here in North Louisiana. Where I decided to go was Russia, specifically to the Kamchatka Peninsula, which was said to be like



After years of reading about fishing in exotic places, Daniel Carpenter finally took such a trip himself. He decided to fish the Kamchatka Peninsula in Russia, a place that proved worthy of envy amongst his fishing buddies back in Louisiana.

Alaska 75 years ago. I can't corroborate the comparison, but I can say that my Russian floattrips there a couple of years ago met or exceeded my expectations. The company I chose to travel with was Ouzel Expeditions out of Girdwood, Alaska. Their reputation in the community seemed excellent, and they were always responsive. I can't offer a higher recommendation for

Ouzel than to say that when I was ready to return last summer

I never considered going with anyone else. I booked two back-to-back one week floattrips that stretched from late August into early September. My group arrived in Petropavlosk after an uneventful 4½-hour flight from Anchorage. Trips to Kamchatka are structured on a Friday-to-Friday basis. This is necessary as there is only one weekly flight between Anchorage and Kamchatka's capitol city, Petropavlosk. Upon arriving, you quickly realize that you've entered an anomaly called the Russian time zone. Everything moves in a slower, sometimes inexplicable, fashion here. Just relax! You're on vacation anyway. Visually, the city itself is a bit shocking at first, especially when compared to the luxury we have here in the States.

The influence of years of Communist rule in which standardization was the requirement is evident in the conformity of all the architecture. But what is lost aesthetically on the outside is more than made up for on the inside, as hotels, restaurants, shops and markets are well maintained and quite comfortable. The helicopter ride to the river is an amazing experience that has to be one of the highlights of any Russian



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fishing trip. The MI-8 helicopters used for transport seem to be well maintained (by some standard) and, at a minimum, add an element of edgy excitement. Crossing the countryside, you are treated to a seemingly endless landscape of tundra fields, snow capped volcanoes, mountain lakes and beautiful gin-clear rivers. The ride leaves you with the feeling that you could spend a lifetime fishing this peninsula and never have to fish the same water twice. After a 1½-hour helicopter ride, we arrived at our destination river.



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char before, we noticed more of the big rainbows were coming up to our dries. On average, each angler in our group landed between 12 and 20 rainbows a day measuring 18 to 23 inches. Every day, about three out of six anglers would bring in a 'bow measuring 25 to 27 inches. The char action was even better. An angler here can catch 15- to 20-inch char until his arms fall off. Our daily routine started with coffee and breakfast, and then the crew would break camp while we got a start on the fishing just wading along the banks. The inflatable rafts would catch up with us and float us from hole to hole and run to run. The vast majority of the fishing was done by wading. The guides (two of them were Russians and one was American) did an excellent job of putting us in the best possible locations and recommending what flies we should use. Lunch was prepared daily along the river.

After lunch and a short break, we would continue floating and fishing down the river. The camp rafts would slowly move ahead towards the end of the day, scouting for camp locations. By dusk, we were out of our waders and sharing our daily fishing stories around a campfire accompanied by a Russian piva (beer), wine that the group brought with them and/or a cigar.

The camp consisted of a large kitchen/dining tent, where we ate family-style at a long dining table. There was a covered area where they made the campfire and where we could gather round and relax. Sleeping quarters were in two-man dome tents furnished with cots.

While the crew set up camp and began preparing lunch, we put on our waders and began discussing strategies. The river was teeming with activity, as the pinks were running heavily. We soon realized that foul hooking dying pinks was going to be a bit of a nuisance. We were fishing with subsurface streamers, usually an egg sucking leach, and upon stripping back would often hook a pink in a fin, in the hump or in the side. We discovered, however, that if we switched to dry flies the pinks were not such a problem, and although we'd been catching plenty of rainbows and



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All the equipment was quality gear, with the tents and cots American-made. In addition to the guides, there was an interpreter and a camp cook who prepared excellent meals. We had home made *borsch*, fresh vegetables and salads and fresh-caught char prepared numerous ways. Overall, the camp crew consisted of some of the hardest working people I have ever met. As for the rivers that Ouzel Expeditions fishes, I fished two – the Kapushka and another river they call the Kartuska, which I've been

told are code names for these streams. Outfitters on the Kamchatka, you must understand, are a bit territorial. The Kartuska is quite rocky with many large boulders on the shore. Wading is easy to moderate, but anglers must beware of deep holes. It is a beautiful river that meanders through a closely wooded area for some time before opening up. It is not very wide or braided. The other river was very different. It was wide and open, more braided and much shallower. It was also not rocky like the Kartuska. It was easy to wade. With that, I should probably not divulge any more details

Daniel Carpenter.



The Kapushka River is wide and open, more braided and much shallower. It was also not as rocky as the Kartushka, and it too was easy to wade.



We ran into some of the four-legged inhabitants of the Kapushka River.



The MI-8 helicopters used for transport seem to be well maintained and, at a minimum, add an element of edgy excitement.



The city of Petropavlosk is a bit shocking at first. Years of Communist rule is evident in the architectural standardization, but what is lost aesthetically on the outside is made up for on the inside.



The helicopter ride to the river from the city of Petropavlosk is an amazing experience that has to be one of the highlights of any Russian fishing trip. Crossing the countryside, you are treated to a seemingly endless landscape that leaves you feeling like you could spend a lifetime there and never fish the same water twice.