

KAMCHATKA - The name alone creates visions of the Silk Road through ancient cities like Samarkand and Tashkent mixed in with journeys on the Orient Express. For Flyfishers, however, it has become a destination spot for catching huge Rainbow Trout on large dry flies.



We changed into our waders and started fishing while our hosts set up camp and rigged our Sotar rafts for our journey downriver. There are other outfitters in Kamchatka who establish a base camp and then jet boat their guests up and down the river. That may be more comfortable but I think that with everyone

in that camp fishing basically the same water, only on different days, our way is better because we're continually fishing new water by easily wading downstream each day to a new camp where we slept in comfortable tents each night. The water is big enough and the bottoms are smooth enough that we were continually fishing without getting in the other guy's way. We had the usual drizzle, bears and bugs, but it wasn't too cold, and, as you know, catching big fish makes a lot of inconveniences go away.

The first day, the five of us fished egg sucking leaches and caught many of the resident char between 20-25" long. You had to beat them off the leach to get to the rainbows. About noon, I decided to fish on top with mice and verminators. With these

flies, I was able to eliminate the char and I started to get into rainbows which averaged 26". Pretty soon we were all "mousing." What a thrill to see them smash the floating mouse and then jump, jump and jump again. They looked like a rainbow colored side of beef leaping out of the water. Each of us averaged 10 to 15 of these enormous trout a day. Although the trip fish was 32 ½ inches long, we all caught trout over 30 inches, probably once or twice a day.



Everyone used an 8 weight rod with an 8 or 9 floating weight forward line. We attached about 8 feet of OX or simply a 20 pound test leader as these fish are not leader shy. A cute, size 2, well greased mouse was then attached and if you could throw it accurately about 70-75 feet you could take a bunch of fish. A lot of the fish were taken near

overhanging trees, bushes, rocks and snags. You could bet that if there was structure or deep water a hog would hammer your mouse. The fish weighed a lot and if they took the verminator near a snag, you had to horse them for a little bit until you got them into deeper water because they'd break you off in the bushes if you let them run back to their hiding places. By the way, a big net and a wading staff are helpful.

I developed a special technique to entice a strike and consistently took above average fish. If you're interested and promise not to tell, I might share it with you.



The five of us, all experienced and well traveled got along well and were on the river for a week and enjoyed a simply wonderful trip and decided that there was no place to go in the world for such superb, healthy and large rainbows, including New Zealand. There

may be other places where the occasional fish might be bigger, but for consistency, you can't beat Kamchatka.

The Russians were great and the food was super. You may remember the old saying that says "you can't get there from here." Well, to and from was the worst part of the trip as it is long, tiresome and boring. Two years ago when I went, there was a 4 hour flight from



Anchorage to Petropavlovsk which was fairly easy as you could overnight conveniently in Anchorage, get up early the next morning and be fishing by that afternoon. That airline, Magadan, went belly up so we had to go the long way around. The trip home was 40 hours of traveling but believe me, it was worth it. I'll be going back.

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