

September 30, 2007
The Angling Report
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Dear Sirs,

I would like to add additional information to the enclosed fishing trip report. I previously reported on a fishing trip to Kamchatka 13 years ago for which I was made an Honor Roll subscriber.



I have been fishing in Kamchatka several times: the first 13 years ago with Ouzel Expeditions of Girdwood, Alaska and four years ago fishing the Sadanka River with The Fly shop of Redding, California. The trip to the Sadanka River was really great but I decided to go again with Ouzel Expeditions because their trips are some what more "authentic" utilizing a Russian outfitter and are not "Americanized" without fixed camps, flush toilets, showers, etc. Ouzel Expeditions has a long standing relationship with the Russian outfitter that forms the basis of their trips. Their Russian outfitter provides the personnel on their trips with all the equipment such as rafts, tents, supplies provided by Ouzel Expeditions. The Russian outfitter takes care of accommodations in Petropovalosk, and handles all of the airport transfers and helicopter rides. The Russians provide the camp staff including the cook, head guide who does the majority of the camp chores, additional "guides" to handle the rafts and an interpreter if necessary. Ouzel provides an experienced American fishing guide who travels with the fishing clients all the way from the United States to Kamchatka and acts as head coordinator in camp.

The Ouzel Expedition trips are basically a "float trip" using rubber rafts for transportation on the river and setting up a camp site periodically to fish new water. The time spent at a camp site is determined by the amount of good fishable water at each camp site. The camp sites are flexible and determined by the quality of the fishing at any given time. On a one week trip you fish one river, floating and working your way down river. On a two week trip when the helicopter comes to the river with new fisherman and to take out the fishermen who are on a one week trip you might move to a different river or move upstream or downstream on the same river depending where the best fishing is.



The Russian outfitters are very experienced and know their rivers well (the head outfitters used to work for the local fish and game department). They determine where to fish and the location of the camp sites. On this particular trip I fished with the same chief Russian guide that I fished with 13 years ago. His name is Eugene (Eugenii) and he is a really a nice guy. He now speaks enough English that we did not need an interpreter on our trip. I was also pleased that Lena was our cook (chef would be a better term) who was same cook on my previous trip 13 years ago. The food on this trip was outstanding.

The quality and quantity was great. We had traditional Russian soups, plenty of meat, good vegetables, fresh fish, etc. There was an unlimited supply of cold beer and vodka. The equipment was first rate with REI tents, thermarest pads, sleeping cots, and SOTAR rafts. The camp staff was efficient, hard working and friendly. Our American guide from Ouzel Expeditions was Branden Poole. Branden is an experienced outdoors man who is a serious skier, mountain climber and fisherman. He is a really nice guy who relates well with people and works hard to keep every one happy. He worked very well with his Russian counterparts and also knew the river we fished well.



This type of trip is best for the experienced fisherman who is self-reliant. I personally prefer to fish by myself without a guide or with a buddy to take pictures. I like a guide who knows the river who can "show you the lay of the land" and then leave you alone. One of the best features of this type of trip is the small number of fishermen in camp. The first week we had four fishermen and six the second. This was just right.



The fishing was really good if you like big fish. The rainbows were migratory rainbows that were following a large run of Chum Salmon. The rainbows averaged 24 inches in length and ranged up to 30 inches. The fish were real "toads" with girths averaging 16-17 inches. The average fish was 6-7 pounds in weight.

The size of the rainbows and the current of the river necessitated using eight weight rods to handle the fish properly. Fortunately all you needed was a floating line. The fishing was similar to Alaska style fishing except you didn't use any egg patterns (thank goodness) but egg sucking leeches (purple or white) or bunny matuka style streamers (natural or white). The rainbows were right where they are supposed to be, near the banks and structure. It was pretty exciting using a bunny streamer and fishing the banks. I could see every take of a fish as the fly was easy to track being only a few inches under the surface. The size of the rainbows was amazing for a river (running water). If anything the fish were too big! They were really hard to handle when you were fishing by yourself (it would have been better to have someone with a big net to handle the fish quickly and let them go). I took it easy, fishing only when I wanted to and still averaged 6-10 rainbows per day. The number of Artic Char was unlimited. You could take them on a purple egg sucking leech or use a size 10 stimulator skittered on the surface. The water was easy to read and it was easy to find a "char hole". After a while you just had to move on and leave them alone.



The river we fished is called "The Kapushka" by Ouzel Expeditions. It is a very unusual river in that it is very wide for the depth of the river. It ranged up to a hundred yards in width in places with a depth of 2-3 feet. The majority of the river was much narrower with sites of braiding and well defined holes. The river runs clear even with rain and has a stable bottom. It is relatively easy to wade with a moderate current. In the smaller braids it was possible to "sight fish" the rainbows which adds to the fun.



The number of Brown Bears we saw was incredible. If I had known that there were that many bears I would have brought my single lens reflex camera with a telephoto lens. Over a two week period we must have seen 60-70 bears, many with two cubs. The bears were just everywhere. We saw them all day long, near camp and fishing along the river. It added a whole new dimension to the fishing.

The weather on our trip was OK. Kamchatka really didn't have any summer this year. It was overcast most of the time and cool with temperatures in the mid fifties to upper sixties. We had one night of rain showers and a few sprinkles one day. It was good for fishing.



It will be better when there are direct flights from Anchorage to Petropavolosc, but the trip via Seoul Korea wasn't too bad. The ride from Vladivostok to Petro was the exception due to the old plane with no air conditioning.

I usually take a minimum of two weeks on a fishing trip out of country. This allows accommodation for bad weather and unexpected problems. It also allows more time to minimize jet lag.



All in all it was a good trip. Ouzel Expeditions has a long history in Kamchatka, they have a long term relationship with their Kamchatka partners and are good at what they do. I recommend Ouzel Expeditions for the experienced fisherman who doesn't mind camping out and wants the opportunity of getting to know some really nice Russian people.



Gordon Cox