

FLY FISHING NEW ZEALAND - THE RIGHT EXPECTATIONS

The Real Story on Trout Fishing New Zealand by Tony Orman is listed under “Suggested Reading” in our comprehensive Fly Fishing Adventures New Zealand pre-trip information. Mr. Orman offers an effective, accurate, and concise description of fly fishing in New Zealand and obtaining his book is a solid idea for assistance in preparing for a New Zealand trip. Following are key excerpts from the book and additional comments based on our personal experiences.

WHY FISH NEW ZEALAND?

More than a few travel writers have said New Zealand has a piece of every other country: the fjords of Norway, the Alps of Switzerland, the Pastoral tranquility of the English countryside, the beaches of Hawaii, the thermal areas of Iceland, the wine producing areas of France, the gold rush country reminiscent of California, a volcano like Japan’s Fujiama, and so many more miniature cameos of other places.

New Zealand is small, about Japan’s size, slightly larger than the United Kingdom, and three quarters the size of California.

But here’s another bonus. Japan may have over 120 million people, the UK over 60 million and California over 40 million, but New Zealand has a mere 4 million. It is uncrowded and with space and solitude. That is the way it is on *most* lakes, streams, and rivers.

THE TRUTH ABOUT NEW ZEALAND’S TROUT FISHING!

Noted American humorist Ed Zern once wrote, “Fisherman are born honest, but they soon get over it.” Thus are trout fishing myths born. A look at a few New Zealand myths might restore some truth.

MYTH NUMBER ONE: NZ’S TROUT ARE EASY TO CATCH

New Zealand’s trout are totally wild trout and are therefore very wary. Casting and presentation are of extreme importance. So are perseverance, patience, and the ability to observe, analyze and deliver!

The observations by guides of visiting anglers is that the casting ability and presentation standards cover a wide range from superb casters to those who flail the water on both the back and forward casts.

The brutal reality for some New Zealand trout, particularly large browns in wilderness areas where they are heavily fished, is that you may only get one cast. Not always, but there is a 50-50 chance.

Often if you “goof” the first cast, the fish will “stiffen” and sulk and not feed and soon after will probably slide away into deeper water.

MYTH NUMBER TWO: YOU WILL CATCH A “DOUBLE FIGURE” TROUT

New Zealand’s trout fishing rivers hold varying numbers of trout. Some may hold many fish averaging a kilogram (2.25 lbs), others may have few trout, but a greater chance of a big fish of 3 or 4 kilos (7 or 9 lbs or larger).

In some rivers there may be a trout every 10 or 20 metres (yards) in the better stretches, in other rivers you may have to walk a kilometer (0.6 mile) or more between trout but they are probably hefty.

There is often the possibility, not a probability, of double figure trout, but in any case, you could catch the biggest trout of your life in New Zealand.

MYTH NUMBER THREE: TAUPO’S THE PLACE TO GO FOR TROUT

The American sportsman and novelist Zane Grey, through his enthralling book “The Anglers Eldorado” publicized New Zealand. However he fished for trout only at Taupo and hence it was that region that

commanded the majority of publicity until recent decades when other fishing spots such as in the South Island have been discovered.

If you like space and solitude in your fishing, Lake Taupo may not be for you. Particularly, in winter and spring, on many rivers, you are likely to have the company of several anglers and especially on the well known pools of the Tongariro River.

PLANNING YOUR TRIP

This emphasizes the importance of seeking and getting accurate advice before planning your fishing holiday. Local knowledge both of the total New Zealand and the individual regions and indeed rivers and streams is exceptionally important. An important aspect is to appreciate your holiday is naturally limited to a specific number of days. By planning and making use of the available resources such as sound pre-tour advice, then you are ensuring greater odds for your trip to be successful. A guide with local knowledge, is vital to getting the most from your New Zealand trout fishing vacation.

NOW TO SOME TRUTHS

NZ can give you probably your best chance in the world of catching a big, trophy sized trout – this being a relative term and not necessarily a double figure (over 10 pound) trout.

- Can give you a memorable experience of sublime solitude
- Often can put you into beautiful scenic surroundings
- Lets you fish unbelievably crystal clear, ultra-clean streams where you will see the trout before casting.
- Can let you enjoy the company of friendly New Zealanders and enjoy a tempo that will remind you of how sweet life was decades ago.

COMMENTS FROM MUELRATH ON THE “FLY FISHING ADVENTURES APPROACH” TO NZ PLANNING

Generally, we specialize in the “quality” rather than “quantity” aspect of trout fishing in New Zealand – i.e., stalking lunkers on streams and rivers without footprints on the streams edge. Usually, we avoid the “famous rivers” because, even in New Zealand, the famous rivers have deep footpaths worn near their banks. However, our primary objective is to create an itinerary that meets the objectives of the traveler and if those objectives include some of the “famous rivers” and waters with greater numbers of smaller fish, then they are included.

We do enjoy the aspect that some of our favorite streams and rivers don’t even warrant a mention in most of the many books about “where to fly fish in New Zealand.” We believe that having the right guide (or fishing from the “right lodge”) is the key to getting to the right waters.

In some areas, helicopters are an asset (albeit, often an expensive option) in finding the best waters. However, in other places, copters are not used to uncover some of New Zealand’s finest water – it’s the guide and his local knowledge that is key in these locales. Generally, an itinerary will include suggestions for both approaches.

Overall, itinerary planning for New Zealand is a personalized process because of the many options, budgetary considerations, and different approaches. A couples itinerary will have different elements than a “hard core” fishing itinerary – unless the couple are both “hard core” fly fishers (i.e., addicts).

Accommodations range from farm stays and campouts to “world class” fly fishing lodges and luxury country inns. Many of the finest places we’ve ever stayed in all our world-wide travels have been rural or country New Zealand inns or lodges – there is an amazing array of these properties.

Ideally, if geography allows, part of the planning process includes getting together for our slide tour of New Zealand where an understanding of the many options can be visually observed.

TRIP REPORT
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