



THE ANGLING REPORT

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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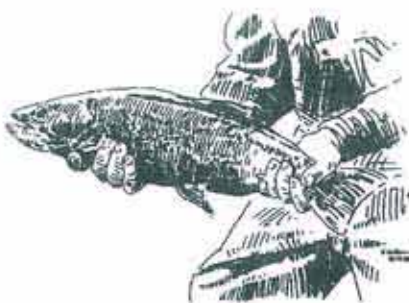
DATELINE: ARGENTINA

FREE Fishing Report Limay River Lodge Gets an Over-the-Top Review

Editor Note: In the December issue, we told you about the new lodge Jorge Trucco has built on the Limay River in Argentina, and we indicated that a FREE Fishing Trip Report would be on the way shortly. Well, here it is! The lucky angler picked for the trip, Bill Wason, gives the new lodge a rave review. You can find out more about our FREE Fishing Trip Program in a box elsewhere in this issue.

When *The Angling Report* notified me last fall that I had been selected to go on a FREE Fishing Trip to Jorge Trucco's new Limay River Lodge in Argentina this past December, I was

more than delighted. Not only would the trip get me out of the way of an upcoming blast of Arctic air, but it would also give me a chance to fish a river that was generating lots of excitement. It turned out that I actually fished two rivers on this trip (the Caleufu for two days and the Limay for three days) but I will report here only on my time on the Limay



In short, the Limay afforded me what I can only call a truly exceptional

fishing experience. Jorge Trucco's new lodge may well create a paradigm shift in what constitutes the ultimate Patagonia fly fishing destination. Trucco, in case you don't know, has been instrumental in developing fly fishing in Patagonia since 1978. His company, Patagonia Outfitters in San Martin, formed a new partnership to build the Limay River Lodge. The place went up in just six months, opening in early December, 2014. I was the first official guest.

The Limay is one of the few rivers in central Argentina that doesn't already have multiple lodges on its banks. Previously, in fact, the only way to fish it was by arranging for a multiday float trip. Like many rivers in Patagonia, it is surrounded by very large estancias, and access is very limited. The Limay flows northeast through the high desert steppe of central Argentina for 260 miles from its natural outflow on Lago Nahuel Huapi to its merger with the Rio Neuquén, where it helps form the Rio Negro near the city of Neuquén. Once a freestone river, five hydroelectric dams have converted the Limay into a series of tailwaters and reservoirs. Only the first 25 miles of the river remain as a natural, freestone river.

The fishable portion of the middle Limay is between the third dam (Pichi Picún Leufú) and the bottom of the Ezequiel Ramos Mexía reservoir near the town of Picún Leufú, a river distance of about 40 miles. On a map, this roughly corresponds to the middle third of the distance between Bariloche and Neuquén. Jorge Trucco's new lodge is the only one on the river. It's centrally located, with easy access from Bariloche, Neuquén, and San Martin airports (it's about a three-hour drive from each).

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The fishing here is for resident trout and for large migratory browns that make their way upstream from a gigantic reservoir created by a dam that was built in the 1960s, El Chocón Dam. Resident trout are typically sought in three different river sections, each one about six to eight miles long. Because the river is braided with multiple channels, up to 10 different floats can be done without repeating any water. The fishing for migratory brown trout (typically between March and May), takes place farther downstream closer to the reservoir.

Until recently the river was known only for its migratory brown trout fishing, which was interesting and desirable on its own. But what turned this area into a powerhouse fishing spot is Trucco's discovery that the river also hosts a very healthy population of resident rainbows and brown trout. The resident fish feed on usual trout fare and can be seen taking insects on the surface. The migratory browns feed on minnows, *pancoras* (a small crab-like crustacean), and any small trout that venture into the river. Jorge and his guides have spent a great deal of time and effort researching where and when these different fish populations can be found and how to fish for them.

The fishing season here is quite long, stretching from November through May. Fishing is predominately for resident fish November through February, and for migratory

browns March through May. But both populations can be found in the river throughout the entire season, just to a varying extent.

Trucco's new lodge is an adobe Southwestern-style structure situated conveniently close to the river. It's U-shaped, with an open central courtyard. There are seven luxurious guest rooms that can be appointed with two large single beds or one super-king bed. One entire wall is dedicated to an open closet, which allows ample room for clothing and gear. The ensuite baths have a wonderful rainfall shower. Rod racks and wader hangers are outside on the covered walkway. At the east end of the structure, there is a large open meeting/dining room. A fire pit in the courtyard surrounded by a large seating area is ideal for cool evening gatherings. The west end of the lodge is framed by a two-story service building housing a garage, watchman's quarters, and, soon, a fly-tying room.

The fit and finish of Limay River Lodge are comparable to a five-star hotel. The meals, wine, and personal attention are superb. Dining times can be adjusted to meet the fishing schedules of the guests. There is no cell phone signal at the lodge, but there is a good Wi-Fi connection. As for river craft, Trucco has invested in a mini-fleet of Hyde-style drift boats and new 4x4 trucks equipped with rod racks to trailer them to the river. A good supply of waders, boots, and rods are available if needed.

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■ *The Angling Report* encourages subscribers to file reports on great places to fish and important news developments that help the rest of us decide where to go—or not to go—fishing. Subscribers who file unusually important and useful reports are placed on our Subscriber Honor Roll and sent a complimentary Angling Report Honor Roll fishing cap. Honor Roll subscribers

also get special consideration for FREE trips. If you have been on an interesting trip recently, send a letter-length report to see if you can get on our subscriber Honor Roll. E-mail it to doncausey@anglingreport.com. You can find the complete list of Honor Roll subscribers on our website, www.anglingreport.com. Click on "Honor Roll subscribers."



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As lovely as the new lodge is, the river is the *raison d'être* of all the time and effort put into this new destination. It is absolutely incredible, too. I would happily sleep in a tent and eat stale bologna sandwiches to fish this river.

The first night I arrived in San Martin I had dinner with Trucco so we could discuss the week I had in front of me. Pablo was to be my guide for the week, he said. Indeed, he and I met the next morning and departed for our initial two days on the Caleufu, where I fished solo for two days. I'll report on the Caleufu float separately in a future issue. After that, we drove to the lodge where Trucco was to join us for the remainder of the week.

Pablo turned out to be one of those rare, A-plus guides who not only knows the fish, the river, and the boat, but is always taking his anglers' needs and abilities into consideration. He would always extend his arm to help me when I was wading. When we were in the boat, he was as attentive to the angler in the back seat as the one in the front seat, properly positioning the boat so we could both get good casts. He was always pleasant and never critical of a bad cast. They don't come any better than Pablo.

Because the Limay River fishery is relatively new and very much in the news, I approached my time here with a little more rigor than a normal fishing trip. While I normally wouldn't take notes and repeatedly measure fish, I made an effort to do so on this trip. Still, I'm sure some will be skeptical of the numbers I will be sharing shortly. Frankly, I would be too. The Limay, quite simply, is like no other river I have ever fished. The vast majority of the fish we caught measured 19 to 20 inches. Only one trout was smaller than 17 inches. Fish measuring 22 inches were a daily occurrence. Even the occasional *perca* we caught tended to measure 20 inches or more. There are no small fish in this river, it seems; they get eaten.

Obviously, there has to be a nursery somewhere, but its location hasn't been discovered yet.

We fished dry attractor flies 90 percent of the time, with attractor/dropper and streamer fishing making up the remainder. All were effective, but dry fly fishing was just too much fun. The fish here are very strong fighters, with rainbows often going airborne two to four times, while giving lots of head shakes and going on long runs. The browns hit with aggressive strikes and went deep and strong. We fought most of our fish on the reel after a good run cleared any free line. Rainbows outnumbered browns by three to one most days.

Jorge was insistent that I set the



schedule, as he just wanted to go along "for the ride." We fished a leisurely schedule, leaving the lodge at 9 AM and getting off the water about 6 PM after a long lunch break. Pablo had already worn me out on the Caleufu when I arrived at the Limay! I made a point of fishing from the rear seat about half the time so I could better judge Pablo's guide skills and determine if there was a significant front-seat advantage. On most floats there was indeed a significant front-seat advantage of about two to one. I attribute that to the fish being very aggressive, frequently moving two to three feet to get a tasty morsel, so the front angler clears a pretty wide swath.

We divided our fishing time pretty much equally between drift fishing and wade fishing. The wading here

is very easy, though you will want to wear waders even on hot days, as the water is quite cool. If you get hot while drifting, you stop and wade for a while; it's quite refreshing. Fishing from a drift boat is a rare pleasure in Patagonia, as many rivers in this region aren't deep enough to accommodate them.

The first day on the Limay was absolutely beautiful—sunny with a modest wind, warm but not hot. We started out by wading an area that had shallow riffles and deep runs. An attractor/dropper resulted in three or four strikes and two 17-inch bows to the net from a single deep run. We drifted for a couple of hours after that, getting frequent strikes until 2 PM when we stopped at the base of a tall red bluff and walked along a rock ledge. A rocky pool there produced a 19-inch rainbow with a few casts. Walking back toward the boat, I was dragging my fly in the water, and a 20-inch brown took it.

We had lunch on a small hill nearby overlooking the river. As we ate, I watched a large fish lazily lounging in the shallows a few feet to the left of the boat. After lunch I walked down to the shore to within about 15 feet of the unconcerned fish and flopped a big attractor about three feet to its left. I recast and my fly landed two feet to the right of its head, at which point it slowly turned, swam to the fly, and sipped it down. It measured 20 inches. Moving to the right of the boat at Pablo's direction, I cast to another large rainbow that broke my fly off. Then I netted a 15-inch *perca* and another 20-inch rainbow, all in about 15 minutes. Life is good.

I changed to the rear seat as we started our afternoon drift. Jorge did very well, hooking three to four fish in about half an hour while I took about half that many. Activity increased notably after 4 PM, and we had multiple strikes in the 15 minutes or so before we took out at 6 PM. For the day, I had 12 fish to the net, 20 on the hook and at least 30 strikes.

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After a drive of a few minutes, we were greeted at the lodge with face towels and hors d'oeuvres. Then it was time to shower and change clothes. That left time for a conversation over a glass of Malbec before a wonderful dinner at 9 PM.

The second day was overcast, warmer and almost windless. Fishing was even better, with my first fish caught at the put-in on the first cast. At our first wading opportunity, Jorge threw a large streamer and landed a 26-inch brown after a long fight. I caught a 12-inch rainbow shortly after, which probably had just missed a dinner date with the brown. We pretty much had nonstop strikes all day,

including three doubles, all 19- to 20-inch fish. I boated at least 15 fish, and Jorge even more. We must have had more than 100 strikes between us, but a much higher rate of missed hook sets and "gentleman's releases" than on the first day. Late in the day we boated three *percas*, all measuring 20-plus inches.

The last day was windy and cooler. It was the only day that line management and casting were an issue. Nonetheless, fishing was as good as the first day. At lunch we noticed a sudden increase in water flow that lifted the boat off its anchor, causing it to float away. Jorge saved the day by jumping into the river and clinging

to the boat as it floated downstream some 50 yards. Remarkably, the electrical generation pulse of water did not adversely affect fishing. If anything, it made it better. I finished strong from the front seat: over 15 fish to the boat for the day and lots more that got away. Among the highlights of the day was our taking of 20- and 22-inch browns. But the most spectacular moment was when a large rainbow rocketed up from the depths, grabbed my fly, and leapt three feet in the air, where it sommersaulted before taking me into my backing with a long run downstream. It doesn't get any better than that.

The Limay is a perfect 6-wt. rod river. I used both a Sage One and a TFO-BVK rod. Both worked well. Line choice can be important with the wind. A Rio Grand seemed a little light with the wind we had, but an SA Mastery Textured Nymph Tip line worked well in all but the windiest conditions. I would have liked to have tried an even heavier line, such as a Rio Outbound Short for the last day when the wind was an issue, but I didn't bring one. Fishing conditions and fly choices can vary, so it's nice to have a couple of lines to choose from. A 2X Trout Hunter leader performed better than a 3X leader at turning over the heavier flies we used. Casting distances here are typical of any larger river, 30 to 50 feet on average. A Teeny 200-grain sink line was fine with my 6-wt. rods, but you'll want a 300-grain or heavier line with an 8-wt. rod if you want to go for the big migratory browns.

We used large attractor flies 90 percent of the time (Turks, Chernobyls, and big black Fat Alberts). The fish weren't very particular, attacking almost any big ugly fly with legs, and perfect drifts weren't always necessary. Many strikes were triggered with short jerky movements or at the end of the drift with the fly dragging. Strikes were often close enough to be seen. Watching the fish rise through clear water to take or reject my fly was exciting. Large streamers in the

☐ Want to Go Fishing Free?

All about Our Free Fishing Program

■ *The Angling Report* has always valued feedback from its subscribers. And the reasons are clear. For one thing, *Angling Report* subscribers are some of the world's most experienced fishermen. Hence their judgments about fishing destinations are broad-based and sound.

And our subscribers' insights are refreshingly candid. That's because they are written from a point of view that no other publication embodies—namely, the paying client point of view. You can see that point of view in the report this month by Bill Wason about his FREE fishing trip to River Lodge in Argentina.

So here's the deal. We encourage lodge owners, guides, and others to offer us FREE visits to their facilities with the understanding that we will turn these invitations over to *Angling Report* subscribers who convince us that they are capable of writing useful and accurate reports about their experience. More than 50 subscribers have been invited on FREE fishing trips here in the United States and to foreign destinations such as Argentina, Christmas Island, Brazil, and Mexico. The total value of all that travel is in the hundreds of thousands of dollars. And the good news is that more

outfitters are offering us FREE trips in return for reviews.

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four- to seven-inch range are the ticket here for the migratory browns. The nymphs used were Hare's Ear, Prince, and Copper Johns in sizes 16 to 18. A 3X tippet was standard to the fly, with 4X to the dropper. The guides have flies, but everything is hard to come by in Argentina and any you bring are appreciated.

Floating the Limay is pretty much like floating a bigger western river in North America. Shooting heads and long casts were simply not necessary. The river is big enough, however, that back cast tangles were rare.

Travel to Limay River Lodge is pretty easy, and Jorge makes it even easier by providing excellent in-country travel assistance through Eugenia Brizuela, his sales and travel coordinator. She is a full-service travel agent. She can book your domestic flights, which I highly recommend, since flights are frequently changed or canceled. She can also arrange transportation between the international and domestic airports in Buenos Aires as well as your hotel room in Buenos Aires if you elect to stop over on your way in or out of the country.

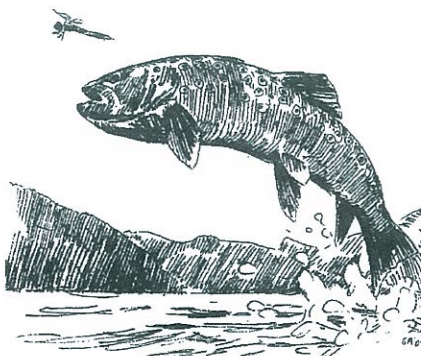
Most flights from the United States are overnight and arrive in Buenos Aires in the early morning. You can either overnight in BA or transfer to the domestic airport and fly to your final destination the same day. Just be sure you schedule flights with at least a four-hour interval because of traffic conditions in Buenos Aires. It can take a long time to get from one airport to the other. Neuquén, Bariloche, and San Martin are all equidistant from the lodge.

For those not familiar with the Argentine equivalent of our TSA, you should know that it is controlled by the local police departments and is not as standardized as it is in the States or other countries. Rods and reels with line on them are often disallowed as carry-on, especially when returning from Buenos Aires back to the U.S. If you don't pack them in a checked bag, be prepared to be turned

back at security.

There is very little for non-fishing spouses to do at Limay River Lodge. Spouses would likely be much happier left in Bariloche or San Martin where there is a wealth of non-fishing things to do. I haven't spent any time in Neuquén except at the airport, but from what I have seen it is an industrial city and probably isn't a good option.

Tipping guidelines are provided with booking information on this trip, which is something I have come to welcome, as it avoids surprises at the end of the trip. For better or worse, tips have become an integral part of guide and staff compensation. At Limay River Lodge this adds about \$75/day (\$50 for guide and \$25 for staff) to the cost of your trip if you are fish-



ing double.

It should be obvious that I loved this trip. It is like no other fishing experience I have had in terms of the quality of dry fly fishing and the numbers of large fish. The food, wine and accommodations were excellent. Jorge has developed a fabulous fishing destination. It is very easy to combine the Limay River Lodge with fishing in San Martin or Esquel, but I would suggest this be your last stop, as any other fishing opportunities will likely suffer in comparison and you will find yourself wishing you were back here. Enjoy!—Bill Wason.

Postscript: You can get more information on Limay River Lodge at: www.patagonia-outfitters.com. Also, Frontiers Travel (www.frontierstravel.com)

will be booking Limay River Lodge. Additionally, Bill Wason says he has posted photos he took on this trip at: <https://www.facebook.com/patagoniaoutfitters>. Enjoy!

DATELINE: ARKANSAS

Where to Go Fishing Found! An Economical Trout Fishing Trip

Editor Note: How does this sound: a four-night, five-day group fishing trip for only \$300 each. Yes, this was for quality trout fishing. Occasional correspondent Walter Kirkland filed the report.

Weeklong trips to exotic five-star fishing lodges are great experiences if you're in the position to shell out \$3,000 to \$5,000, or even more, to take them. There are many readers of this publication who can handle that sort of expense. Fortunately, for those of us who find that price tag prohibitive on a regular basis, there are excellent alternatives. One such example is a self-guided trip to the White River system near Mountain Home, Arkansas. I have been making regular trips there for the last five years.

The White River System consists of two main streams, the White and the North Fork, the latter better known as the Norfork. Both streams are tailwaters whose flows are regulated by releases from dams (Bull Shoals Dam for the White, and Norfork Dam for the Norfork). On our first trip here some five years ago, four of us rented a two-bedroom cabin at the River Ridge Inn on the Norfork River. Our group has now grown to 10, so we now rent the entire main lodge.

The River Ridge Inn offers a choice of convenient accommodations, from cabins that will sleep one to two persons to the main lodge, which comfortably sleeps a group as large as ours. The average cost of lodging is around \$70 per night per person, and all accommodations are