



For more details on this Outdoor Connection fishing trip see page 2.

Alaska Revisited (John Morrow OC-NE)

Nearly ten years ago, my wife and I honeymooned in Alaska. We were both so blown away by its rugged beauty that we knew that if we ever had the chance to return we would have to take it.

My chance finally came this past summer. Sitting at home in Omaha, I received news that several of us at Outdoor Connection were invited up to Sitka by one of our finest outfitters for a 3-day saltwater sport fishing adventure. Naturally when I heard the news I was very excited. To my surprise however, my wife did not share my enthusiasm. "How come I don't get to go?", she asked. "You know that I like to fish more than you and you now how I love Alaska." She looked up at me from behind pouting, sad eyes.

I had seen this before, the doe-like eyes, the pouting lips; this rarely ended well for me. Alarm bells started ringing in my head. I couldn't believe it, rather than being happy for my chance to return to Alaska, my beloved wife, with the cunning of a cobra, was trying to land the trip for herself. Just because what she said was true didn't make what she was doing right. She knows there is little I can do to resist her wily ways. I was in trouble. I felt myself start to fall under her evil spell. It just wasn't fair—this was my trip to Alaska! I had to think fast or I would be carting kids to soccer all weekend while this woman was catching her limit of my Coho salmon and halibut. I immediately broke eye contact. "Sorry babe, this is a work trip...just Outdoor Connection guys..." I called over my shoulder as I bravely ran outside to cut the lawn. I could feel her doe-eyes narrow and hear teeth grinding and I wondered whether it was going to be warmer in Sitka than it was going to be in Omaha that night.

A few weeks and a tepid good-bye kiss later, I met up with Marc Glades, Scott and Conway Marvin, Chris Lemke and Johnny Wellman. We flew into Sitka on Thursday night with the stunning beauty and rugged terrain of Alaska spreading out below us. We were there to fish with an old friend of Outdoor Connection that has been providing clients "step off, step on" service for over ten years. From the moment you "step off" the airplane, until the moment you "step back on," this outfitter takes care of your every need. No need to pack any fishing gear. They have it all. And true to form, a host from the lodge greeted us at the gate with a friendly smile. She helped get our luggage onto the shuttle and drove us to a local restaurant for dinner and drinks. While the restaurant's steaks were outstanding,

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SPECIAL (MXF1)





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they paled in comparison to meals prepared by lodge's full-time cook during the rest of our trip—cracked crab, prime rib, baked Alaskan, crème brulee and, of course, a variety of fresh fish were just a few of the amazing dishes on the menu.

The lodge is located on a secluded hill overlooking Sitka Sound and immediately upon going inside I knew it was going to be a rough weekend of "work." After all, whether you wanted to take in the view while having cocktails on the deck, kick back in a leather recliner, hit the hot tub, or play pool, this lodge had it all.

Friday morning started early with fresh juice and a warm breakfast before heading down to the gear room where we each found our own set of rubber boots and heavy-duty rain gear hanging on a hook with our name on it. Once we had our gear on, it was a just a short drive to the private docks. A quick round of introductions and handshakes with our captain, Nate, and his trusty deckhand, Levi and we climbed aboard the boats for our first day of fishing. We worked our way up the rugged coast in 30' Almar boats sporting dual Yamaha 225's. After Captain Nate's quick safety brief and instructions on how we would be "mooching" for salmon, we left the relative calm of the Sitka Sound and headed out into open waters. It was a bit ruff, in the same way that supermodels are a bit attractive, but that was quickly forgotten as our lines went tight and the deck was covered with salmon. Our tireless deckhand Levi put them on ice as he continued to net fish, bait hooks, clean the deck and provide valuable advice like "follow your fish!" all without ever missing a beat. It was not long before we drifted into a school of sea bass that attacked our hooks like we had insulted their mother. With the boat filling up fast, we decided to pursue a bit large quarry, halibut. It did not take long before we had a couple of 40 pounders on board. Then the real fishing began. Scott Marvin's rod tip bent to the surface when the fish hit his bait 200 feet down. Captain Nate immediately knew "this was a big fish" as Scott started reeling it in. The battle was going Scott's way when the handle on his reel came off in his hand and the fish dove for the bottom. There was only one thing to do. Capt. Nate started hand lining in the fish as Scott wound the reel furiously with his fingers in an effort to keep up. Thirty grueling minutes later a massive halibut came into view still deep in the water. Redoubling their efforts, Scott and Capt. Nate finally brought the fish to the surface. With no small effort, a couple of shark hooks and Levi's quick work with a gaff, we convinced the fish to come aboard for some pictures. It was nearly 6-feet long and weighed over 300 pounds.



With the boat full of salmon, sea bass, several good sized halibut and one ridiculously large one, it was time to head in. Not a bad way to spend the day. Nowhere, but off the coast of Alaska does this happen.

The next two days of fishing and relaxing at the lodge afterwards continued to be amazing but Monday morning found us back at the airport. In keeping with our outfitter's "step off, step on" philosophy, we were met there by one of the guys from the lodge who had two 50 lbs boxes for each of us filled with our fresh caught, vacuum-packed and frozen fish ready to be checked with our other baggage. A perfect ending to our trip as we stepped back onto the plane for our flight home.



When I got home, my wife was still not terribly happy about the whole "work" excuse and it didn't help matters when I couldn't shut up about the trip. I think her teeth started grinding again right around "...a monster 300 pound halibut!" But once I told her that one of the guys we fished with liked to dress up like Big Foot and run around the north woods of Minnesota, she actually seemed relieved that she had not gone. That night, I cooked her salmon on the grill and all was forgiven. Omaha is no Alaska, but it is beautiful this time of year.

For more information on fishing in Alaska contact your local Outdoor Connection franchise owner.

MTN. LION/COW ELK COMBO HUNT (COH10)
 OPEN DATES BETWEEN NOV. 19 & DEC. 31, 2009
 9 NIGHTS/8 DAYS - \$6,000
 NON-HUNTER - \$2,000

MICHIGAN WATERFOWL HUNT (MIH1)
 OPEN DATES BETWEEN OCT. 20 & DEC. 1, 2009
 3 - HALF DAYS GUIDED WATERFOWL HUNTING
 \$495



Fishing, Louisiana Style (Andy Thiem OC-MO)

I just got back from a fishing trip at Lake Charles, LA in mid-August. I know what you are thinking, "What? Mid-August in Louisiana? You're crazy! It's 500 degrees and the mosquitoes from the Minnesota lakes are vacationing in the Gulf that time of year". Well, you're wrong; at least this year. The weather was spectacular, cool and breezy with a slight shower one day. The rains came mid-day just as it was starting to warm up, so the shower was a great respite. Good thing the humidity was so low that as soon as the rain stopped we dried off, and the only mosquitoes that paid any attention to us were the ones around the dock by the cleaning barrels.

Trip planning for the group of four began about six months prior and the reservations were booked with the usually efficiency of the Outdoor Connections staff we have all come to expect. This Louisiana, all-inclusive outfitter had everything we needed. There was no need for equipment checks, spooling new reels and tackle research. Upon arrival, the group was greeted by Tina and her husband, Captain Erik, along with the aroma of Cajun cooking that can't be adequately described with words. The lodge is a two story structure with a view of Lake Charles from the kitchen and deck. The sleeping rooms are all upstairs (possible flooding issues) and are designed as two sleeping rooms with a full bathroom between them. The sleeping rooms have two sets of bunk beds with each room capable of accommodating four people. Our mid-week stay afforded us the opportunity to only sleep two per room. There is a living room, kitchen, lounge and dining area finishing the upstairs. The den, gaming area, which includes a card table, pool table and lounge, and bar are downstairs.

After being greeted by Tina and wetting our whistles from the road trip, we decided to explore the peninsula and marina. The marina is about ¼ mile away and we took the easy walk over to check out the boats and fishing piers. Additional shore and pier fishing are available for those that don't see enough action on the boats. After meandering around the lakeshore and talking with some of the locals on the pier fishing for their dinner, we came back to the lodge for an outstanding meal of seafood and fish pasta prepared by Tina, herself. After dinner, we obtained our fishing licenses, which can be done over the phone, and settled in to discuss our plan of attack for the next few days of fishing.



The next morning started with breakfast and pre-trip preparations. Food and beverages were packed for lunch on the water and the tackle was loaded as everyone headed to the marina before dawn. We took

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Father/Daughter Caribou Hunt

(by Brian Johnston, MN)



This was our first caribou hunt and I really did not know what to expect as far as animals, the camp and living in the tundra. This outfitter did a good job throughout the whole process. The pre-game meeting in Montreal was informative and short, just the way we like meetings. They had us weigh each of our bags, apply a big orange tag with the weight written on it. This was for the 2nd leg of our flight on a twin otter. At 5:45am we boarded the shuttle to the airport and one of the owners was there to greet us. He made sure we got all our bags checked through security, answered questions on gates and we were on our way. We arrived in Kuujjuaq, greeted by two representatives from the outfitter. They gathered our luggage/gear and got it loaded on the twin otter for our flight to camp. This plane switch was done in less than 30 minutes and we were on our way to the northernmost camp, Lake Tasiataq. Flight time was 50 minutes to the northwest. The flight was great, smooth and low enough for sightseeing and some photos.

The camp was comfortable, the cooking/food was phenomenal (Faye was our cook), and the hunting was great fun. There was enough animals to keep us busy and the two guides we had were great. Gordy and Gordy were our guides; we called them Flash and Cookie. If you're hunting with kids, I would recommend these two guides as they provided enough entertainment, education and laughs for our whole group.

This outfitter did a good job through the whole process. They were at all the critical points for us. A representative met us at the airports on our way in and out of camp. They had a post hunt meeting in Montreal to make sure our meat process was correct and to ensure plans were in place for going home. Being new to this, I never felt like I was confused, lost or wondering what to do. If we had a question they were there to answer it for us. Because of my lack of experience hunting with outfitters, I don't know how this compares to other outfitters but know that at this time I am very happy with their service.

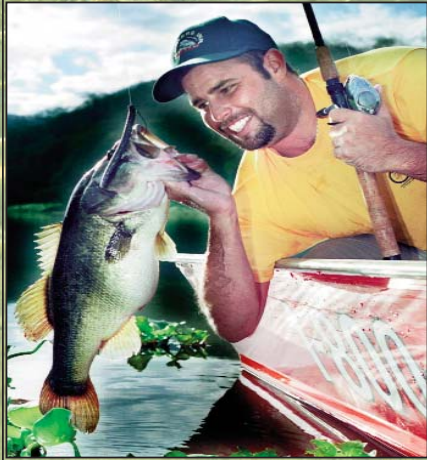
For more information on hunting caribou contact your local Outdoor Connection franchise owner.

MEXICO BASS FISHING

MXF1

\$4,030 FOR TWO

4 Nights - 3 1/2 Days



Choose the dates between
October, 2009
through
July, 2010

(from page 3)

two boats with two anglers to each boat and our guides. After a quick 20 minute ride across the lake, we stopped at one of the many man-made wave breaks and our guides cast nets to pick up some live bait to begin the day. After the live wells were filled we headed to one of the channel entrances to begin our day of fishing. The first few casts were met with the challenges of jig fishing in strong current and submerged rocks. After figuring out the nuances of fishing in the rocks and a few lost hooks, we started landing a variety of fish including Rock Bass; an ugly little fish with a very big bite. Steve said the fish's jaws are strong enough to crush clam shells and the petite fish are not to be taken lightly. As the sun broke the horizon, the fishing action took off. Both boats saw furious action with several speckled trout and redfish landed. Once the initial morning feeding action subsided, the boats split up and headed different directions to each guide's preferred fishing beds. Soon both boats were limited and we headed back to the lodge. While the guides cleaned and packed the fillets, we settled back into the lodge and the fish stories began. After another outstanding meal, this time farm-raised alligator, there were a few cocktails, cards and off to bed. The second day was more of the same with several large redfish landed including a 40 pounder that took over 30 minutes to land.

All too soon, the trip was over and it was time to head back to reality. This outfitter did an outstanding job. The owners and guides are well versed to ensure your groups' stay and fishing trip is an enjoyable and successful one. The food, amenities and service are outstanding and the trip planning is worry-free. They also have a, "Cast & Blast", season in the fall that looks very enticing.

For more information on a fishing destination contact your local Outdoor Connection franchise owner.

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