

Family Fly-Fishing Vacations + Getaways

Economic retractions have an impact on us all. Discretionary purchases are usually the first cuts, and those yearly fishing trips enjoyed with friends and co-workers may be tapered back or go by the wayside. But there is a light at the end of the tunnel and it's bright. At the lodges, ranches and other exciting venues we present here you can combine your family-fun time *and* your annual fishing vacation. *By Tom Keer*

There aren't many places where you can catch Rio Grande cutthroat, but you'll find these little gems in the fishery of the **Lodge and Ranch at Chama**, in New Mexico. While the trout may not be the largest on the property, they are probably the prettiest. And you'll find them in some of the most spectacular parts of the ranch, namely the spring creeks and high-canyon rivers that are between 7,000 to 11,000 feet up.

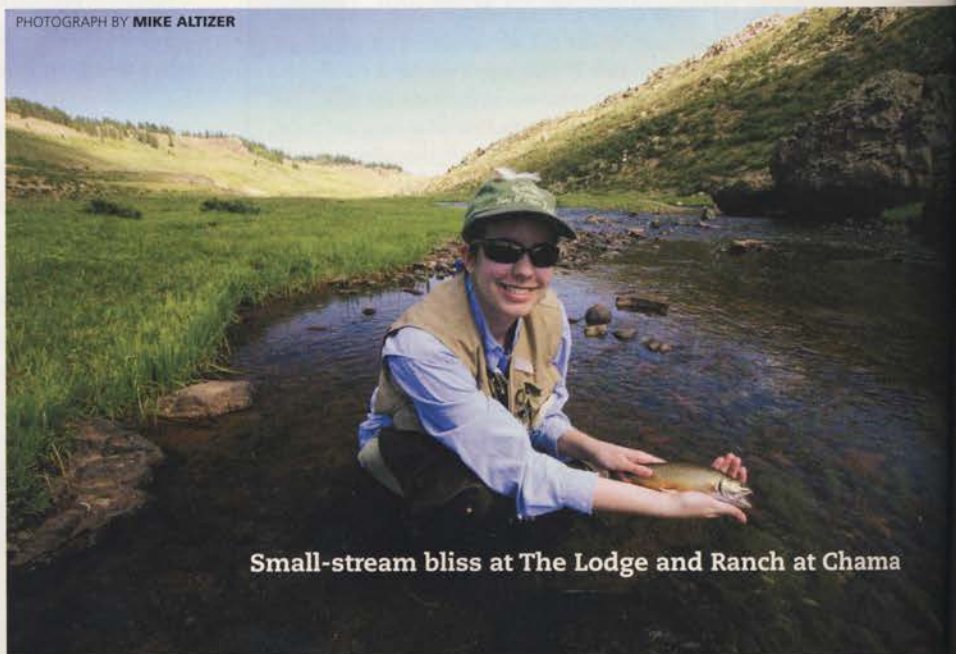
From the early summer's snowmelt until the third week in August, fishing is in high gear at Chama. There are 13 high-country lakes and the best way to fish the open water is in a jon-boat or a float tube, both of which are provided by the ranch. The browns, rainbows, brookies and cutts run to big sizes, so a 9-foot, 5- or 6-weight rod is ideal.

Go to the Lodge and Ranch at Chama for the small rivers and streams. On the eastern side of the ranch are the headwaters for the Brazos River. You'd never know this small stream becomes an enormously wide fishery some 1,200 miles later as it dumps in to the Gulf of Mexico. Up here, the river varies between 18 inches across and deep to 10 yards wide, perfect for making a short cast with light tackle, like a 3-weight. The fish aren't heavily pressured and take dry flies readily. On the ranch's western slope is the Upper Poso Creek, a tiny river where

you'll find those Rio Grande cutthroats. Drifting small dry flies to these fish is among the most fun you can have on the ranch. The main body of Poso Creek gains width about every 100 yards or so, and the lower stretch is gorgeous, with bends, pockets and pools. It's chock-a-block with rainbows, brookies and browns.

Guided ranch tours are a great way to experience the magnificence of the ranch and its native wildlife. You'll see elk, deer, bear, mountain lions and raptors. If you don't want to ride, don your hiking boots and follow one of the two trails for a 1½ mile and 3-mile loop.

PHOTOGRAPH BY MIKE ALTIZER



Small-stream bliss at The Lodge and Ranch at Chama



PHOTOGRAPH BY MIKE ALTIZER

Sportsman also come to Chama to shoot, choosing between a camera to capture the beauty of the ranch or a shotgun to use on the sporting-clays course. For fishermen who bird hunt, the last week in August is reserved for a combined trout and blue grouse double-deal. Big-game hunters will find some of the largest elk and trophy mule deer in North America. Chama is a border town and off-ranch activities will take you around New Mexico and into Colorado. Historic Santa Fe is within two hours. If you're an art fan, check out The Georgia O'Keefe Museum there. Take the family for a ride through the mountains and valleys on the Cumbres Toltec Railroad, one of the few narrow-gauge trains still in existence. In nearby Los Ojos, Tierra Wools continues a weaving tradition that began in the 16th Century; 14 artists shear, card, wash, spin, dye, design and weave blankets, rugs, jackets and other products. If you want a natural hot-spring experience, Colorado's Pagosa Hot Springs is 45 minutes away. With full day spa activities and natural hot springs, your family can relax while you get to fish!

Everything seems big at Chama. From the 36,000-acre ranch to diverse mountain ranges to the trout in the lakes to the 27,000 square-foot lodge to the meals to the elk. It's a sportsman's paradise fit for a fly-fishing king and queen—and their family.

The mountains of Redding, California, are home to some of the state's best trout fishing. And for families who want to take advantage of the fishing, or just to enjoy the area, **The Fly Shop** offers a couple of options including the FishCamp for kids or the Family FishCamp. Both are based on the teaching methods of Mel Krieger. Take it from Michael Caranci, director of the FishCamp program: "Fly schools have been an integral part of all of our travel and outreach programs." FishCamp was founded in 1997 and all facets of fly-fishing are covered at the Antelope Creek Lodge near Mount Shasta, California. The program runs from early June through mid-August.

FishCamp is a 5-day/4-night program for kids. Students arrive at the ranch for lunch on Monday and, following an orientation, the agenda includes daily casting instruction, seminars on reading the water, entomology and knot-tying. There are fly-fishing games and fly-tying instruction at night.

Hands-on fly-fishing instruction on moving water, as well as the actual fishing portion of the class, occurs on Antelope Creek, a private 1.5-mile river. Here, beginner and intermediate anglers can walk to the

river with their instructor and have excellent opportunities at catching rainbow and brown trout. Lodging, fly gear and all meals are provided. The all-inclusive program costs \$750 per camper, and scholarships are available. Attention parents—feel free to explore the Mount Shasta area while your kids learn fly-fishing and continue your vacation after the fly school is complete.

The Family FishCamp follows a similar curriculum but it's oriented toward a family that wants to learn to fly-fish together. And since most schools are only a few days long, Family FishCamp lasts for a 5-day/4-night time frame. Occasionally, two or three families book the entire school and corporations use the school for team-building exercises.

Family FishCamp is also held at the Antelope Creek Lodge. "Fish camp is a wonderful opportunity for folks to spend a week in the lovely Northern California mountains and to learn the terrific sport of fly fishing," Caranci says. "And what speaks volumes of the school is that each year we have students return to help staff the schools first as interns and later on as counselors and guides."

Northern California, and the Mount Shasta area specifically, is a good bet for a family vacation. The Gallery at Mount Shasta deserves a visit; and also the White Thunder Medicine School, where you can study healing methods from Lynette Schmidt, a Cherokee shaman and medicine woman. Golfers are drawn to the Lake Shastina Golf Resort, a Robert Trent Jones designed course; and then there's the course at the Mount Shasta Resort. Visit the Mount Shasta Lavender Farm for a tour.

Located in the mountains about an hour and a half from Denver is the **C Lazy U Guest Ranch & Resort**, hosting guests since 1919. Anglers come to fish the mile-long stretch of the Fraser River as well as the two-mile stretch of that outstanding fishery, Willow Creek; both waters are wadable, with a mix of riffles, runs, pools and pockets. Run-off is short and sweet, typically between May 15 and June 6. You'll find strong mayfly, stonefly, caddis and midge hatches during most of the year. Both rivers offer nymph and dry-fly fishing for browns and rainbows, averaging between 17 to 19 inches.

A long hay meadow runs along one part of the Willow, so be sure to hit it during August's hopper season. Another option is to rent a cabin with a 30-acre lake in your front yard and fish it with float tubes.

And watch for fishing at the C Lazy U to just get better. "We are currently in the middle of a \$500,000 stream restoration project that is designed to improve the fisheries habitat," says Brian Gardner, ranch general manager. "The project will enhance an already excellent fishery." Summer and fall are the main fishing seasons; there's a tremendous amount to do here. Start with a match of tennis and follow it up with a swim or a soak in the hot tub—or the spa overlooking the river.

The equestrian set up? More than 175 horses are available, with four different programs. Skills are taught in the 12,000-square-foot indoor riding facility and outside in the riding rings, paddocks and trails. Learn how to ride your horse while working cattle, or get ready for the Shodeo, a rodeo-style event during which riders can show what they've learned. The ranch welcomes children with three kids' programs—play hide-and-seek on horseback, ride a pony, learn how to saddle, groom and care for a horse.

WorldCast Anglers has their headquarters at Orvis Jackson Hole but the base operations are on the South Fork of the Snake River. This stretch of river flows for 66 miles across southeastern Idaho until it runs into the Henry's Fork. Epic hatches, and in particular the gigantic salmonfly hatch, should be on every angler's bucket list. Combine it with tremendous terrestrial fishing for gulping trout...there isn't much more you can ask for in a trip. The South Fork of the Snake River is well-known for big trout and in particular its large population of cutthroats. WorldCast Anglers offer either wade or float daytrips for anglers short on time.

Families sign up for the unique two-day overnight trip to both the South Fork Hilton and the Cottonwood camps. The float runs through high-mountain valleys and rugged canyons past the largest cottonwood forest in the West. You'll find more than 100 different species of birds as well as 21 raptors. Float the river and you'll see an abundance of wildlife, with deer, elk, bobcats, coyotes, otter, beaver, mink, fox, mountain goats, mountain lions and black bears. Non-anglers will enjoy the drift as much as those catching fish.

Jackson Hole is located between the Teton and Snake River mountain ranges, and offers year-round activities. Outdoors activities include horseback riding, swimming, mountain biking, hot-air ballooning, wildlife viewing, astronomy and wildlife tours along with spas and culinary events. Or consider a visit to WorldCast's affiliate the Teton Springs Lodge and Spa. Play golf at the Headwaters Golf Club. Here you'll find an 18-hole championship course, a 9-hole par-3 course and a practice facility. And don't miss a trip to Grand Teton National Park, which features the 13,000-foot-plus horns of the high Tetons. The conifer forests, lakes and sagebrush flats are the home bison, moose, elk, coyotes and pronghorn antelope in addition to the countless raptors.

Possum Creek Retreat in Tennessee offers fly-fishing on the South Holston River, a world-class fishery that's a clear, cool tailwater with between 5,000 to 6,000 fish per mile. The average trout caught on the Holston can range from 10 to 20 inches, but every year wild browns are caught in the 10- to 20-pound range. Near Bluff City, Tennessee, the river boasts some of the largest trout this side of the Mississippi. It regularly yields fish that rival those of Arkansas's White River, New Mexico's San Juan River and Montana's Big Hole River, the lodge tells us. *Après* fishing, the Possum Creek Retreat Conference Center provides many advantages in one distraction-free location, allowing your attendees (or family!) to bond as a team. The Conference Center specializes in executive summits, board meetings, sales conferences, training and more. Families will love the game room, which has a pool table, ping-pong table and

retro gaming machines including pin ball and slots; other fun amenities on the property include a hot tub, group fire pit with surrounding Adirondack chairs and a shooting/skeet range.

Interior of The High Lonesome Ranch



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF HIGH LONESOME RANCH

When you travel to **The High Lonesome Ranch** to fish, you get two ranches in one. The first ranch is in Debeque, Colorado, a quick drive from Grand Junction. At the main ranch anglers have the opportunity to fish the ranch's 18 spring creek ponds, which are full of brookies, browns, rainbows, and cutthroat and cuttbow trout. After you've sight-fished to your heart's content, head down to their sister property, the historic K-T Ranch in Meeker. You'll have access to about 7 miles of the White River and the three spring creeks on the property. Fishing on the White River is great year-round. Run-off is between mid-May through the end of June. The riffles, runs, pools and pockets offer outstanding fishing. To round out the experience, anglers can add a float on the Roaring Fork or the Colorado.

And there's much more going on at the ranch. The equestrian program is organized around half- and full-day rides throughout miles of trails. There are horses and trails for riders of all abilities and ages. The ranch guides are knowledgeable about local history as well as the regional flora and fauna, and will point out wildlife along the way. Serious riders are welcome to bring along their own horses. Riders stay at the HLR's McKay Fork Cow Camp, and within 20 minutes of completing breakfast you'll be on your way up the valley and behold views that span from the Book Cliff Mountains to the distant LaSalle Mountains near Moab, Utah. Birding has become one of the ranch's most popular and sought-after activities, and members from Audubon have visited the ranch to search for an enormous variety of species.

The High Lonesome Ranch lies in the heart of Colorado's famous mountain-biking country. For the novice cruiser to the advanced racer, the varied terrain of the ranch and its surrounding area offers enjoyment and challenge for all skill levels. Dirt roads and double-track trails within the ranch vary from gentle downhill cruises to lung-busting climbs, all the while offering spectacular scenery and ample wildlife-viewing



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF HIGH LONESOME RANCH

opportunities. The Bureau of Land Management lands surrounding the ranch provide an abundance of mountain bike trails. The world-renowned mountain-biking Meccas of Fruita, CO, and Moab, Utah, are within short driving distances of ranch headquarters. Whether self-guided or accompanied by an expert naturalist, these outings provide an exciting way for guests to experience the ranch.

There's golfing at The Redlands Golf Course, billed as "like playing golf along the bottom of the Grand Canyon, with a couple of sojourns to the Garden of the Gods thrown in." And there's Battlement Mesa, ranked as one of the "Best Courses in America You Can Play" by *Golf Digest*. The routing takes full advantage of its one-of-a-kind setting: a high plains plateau overlooking the Colorado River.

What's more? Whitewater Rafting on the Roaring Fork or the Colorado...wine tours are in the neighborhood... and culinary classes with the ranch's Executive Chef Jordan Asher are popular. You'll also find seasonal wing-shooting for five species of birds as well as big-game hunting for elk, mule deer, Merriam's turkey and mountain lions. Or shoot sporting clays on the ranch's five-stand Pheasant Walk or Flurry courses.

Jan Stoddard is no stranger to good fishing. As the marketing director for the **West Yellowstone Chamber of Commerce**, she's surrounded by it. Fly-rodgers know the area's rivers by names, and they've read about them over the last six decades since Joe Brooks began writing about them. The Firehole. The Gallatin. The Madison. Hebgen Lake. Legendary waters are all within a short drive from West Yellowstone.

Stoddard works with each of the local fly shops and guide services to pair fishermen and families with their specific tastes and preferences. "We have some of the very best fly shops and guides in the area," she told us. "Bud Lilly's Trout Shop, Craig Matthew's Blue Ribbon Flies, Bob Jacklin's Fly Shop and Arrick's Fly Shop are all world-renown."

One of reasons to love West Yellowstone? It harkens back to a quieter time. The simple life of a small town is a fantastic alternative when you're not on the water, and the area offers lots of activities for friends who haven't been bitten by the fly-casting bug.

For instance, anyone can participate in the Memorial Day or Fourth of July parades, you just need to show up. The Wild West Yellowstone Rodeo runs all late spring through summer and its grounds are 4 miles from downtown. Finish off a day of watching roping and riding with local Huckleberry Ice Cream. Take a ride on the Union Pacific Railroad stroll down the town's main streets and poke in the stores, restaurants,

bakeries, art galleries, and specialty shops. West Yellowstone is an activity-oriented town. Take a white-water rafting trip down the Yellowstone, hike or mountain bike in the Gallatin or Yellowstone National Parks, horseback ride near the Continental Divide or along the foothills of the Front Range, paddle a kayak on the river or lake.

And the Federation of Fly Fisherman's Conclave is coming to West Yellowstone this year. The event runs from August 26 to 28, a great reason to bring the family. Visit the Yellowstone National Park and Old Faithful and the Grizzly and Wolf Discovery Center. At the end of the day, relax at the Norris Hot Springs, which features Montana's last wooden-pool hot spring, where the mineral-rich water bubbles up from under the boards. When you're done soaking, enjoy a bison burger, a beer and the house band.

In Philipsburg, Montana, the **Ranch at Rock Creek's** 10 square miles of property is impressive. How many places have their own indoor duck-pin bowling alley in addition to a private theater? The main attraction to anglers, though, is the 4.5 miles of pristine wild-trout river—Rock Creek.

The fishery boasts one of the Montana's highest fish counts and is one of the few places in which you can catch seven species: West-slope cutthroat, rainbow, cut-bow, brown, brookie, bull and the Rocky Mountain whitefish. The "Creek" is famous for its salmonfly hatch, which starts in late May and lasts through early July. Fishing continues throughout the year with numerous mayfly, stonefly and caddis hatches. Indicator rigs with a bead-head nymph as a trailer account for most of the daily catches; but streamer fishing and dead-drift nymphing will also bring out the big fish, particularly in the fall.

Five spring-fed trophy trout ponds are located in hay meadows and pine-mountain draws. Each pond has its own unique ecosystem and trout species. Some ponds have Westslope cutthroats; others have browns; still others have cuttbow hybrids. Much of the fishing here is on the surface, so bring some stout leaders and dry flies; most of the fish in the ponds are trophy-size.

Float fishing is available through nearby outfitters. Some of the country's best-known trout rivers, like the Bitterroot, Clark Fork, Blackfoot and Big Hole are a drive away. The drive alone, like the one through the Skalkaho Pass, is as picturesque as the rivers themselves.

When you're not fishing, take a ride on one of the ranch's 45 horses. Rides are half- and full-day and go through some of the prettiest parts of Montana. Learn arena skills like barrel-racing, pole-bending and roping—and if you're good enough, you can compete in barrel racing in the ranch's weekly rodeo. Sporting clays is offered on a five stand and two courses. The Antelope Draw is a walk-up course for novice to intermediate shooters, and the Wildcat Gulch offers more technical shots designed for advanced gunners. Mountain biking is one of the more popular activities as there are between 30-40 miles of old logging roads and single tracks. You can take a guided hike or grab a map and a pre-programmed GPS and climb to some of the ranch's best views.

Philipsburg is a restored Western town that has retained its originality over the years. Check out the Opera House Theatre, one of the few remaining cultural venues of the Old West. The Drummond PRCA Rodeo is held up the road; there are writers's workshops, Shakespeare in the

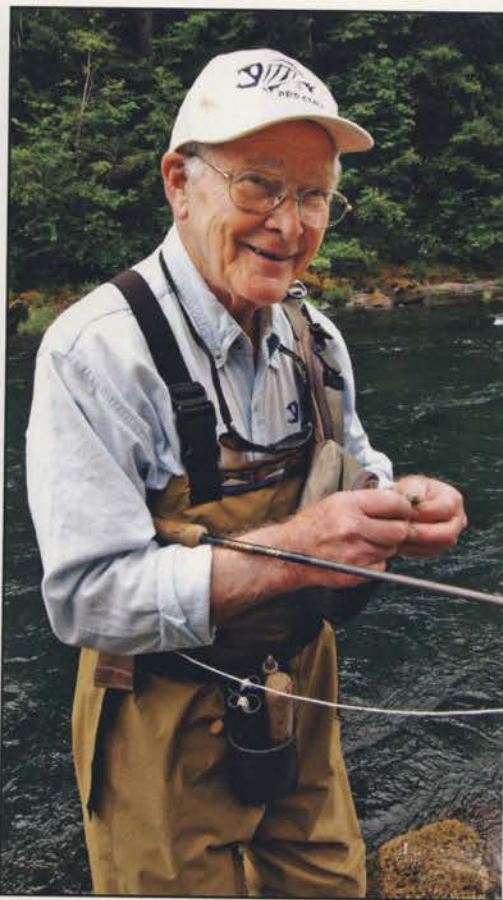
Park, car shows, 50's Sock Hops and lots of barbeques. And within a short driving range of Philipsburg, you'll find 11 ghost towns, most of which still have old buildings like the J.K. Wells Hotel and mines, too.

Since 1966, **Boca Paila** in Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula has been a sought-after destination for inshore tropical fly-fishing. Bonefish and permit are the most abundant species, but there are also seasonal tarpon and snook, thereby making Boca Paila a good choice for a Grand Slam. There are other fish to catch as well, with barracuda, jacks and snapper coming easily to hand.

If you're looking for a slam, you'll start by targeting the most difficult fish first: the permit. A combination of freshwater creeks mixing with the brackish saltwater creates a rich ecosystem, full of shrimp, crabs and baitfish, so there are good schools of permit. After a permit is landed, move on to the channels and mangrove tangles to look for a tarpon. The "tar-poons" tend to hang in the deeper water during the day as well as in the shade. Upon working your poon through his jumps, you'll finish the day with bonefish. The bones at Boca Paila average about three pounds, with good numbers of fish in the 5- to 6-pound range.

While the fishery has been impressive for so long, there are a number of other activities that the family can enjoy. The first is kite-boarding, the combination of surfing with a sail. The onshore winds and shallow water creates a slight chop, and Boca Paila has a group of patient instructors ready to give you your first lesson or to work you through more advanced moves. If you learn down here, it's a skill that you can take back home to other strong fisheries like the North Carolina coast, the Jersey Shore, Rhode Island and Cape Cod.

Animal- and history-lovers come to Boca Paila for on-the-water and on-land excursions. Snorkeling the nearby lagoon is a highly attractive activity. Divers enjoy the diverse marine life, which includes turtles, rays, barracuda, parrotfish and a host of other interesting sea creatures. A series of underwater caves and valleys sit in this shallow water lagoon, with the depths ranging between 6- to 15-foot deep. Located near the lagoon are the Tulum



The Lure of the Umpqua

Just a short distance from Roseburg, Oregon, you'll find 33 miles of water designated just for fly-fishing, all of it located along the wonderful North Umpqua River, known for its Steelhead run. Frank Moore, Ambassador for fly-fishing the North Umpqua asks, "What are you waiting for?"



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Learn From The Best

Isn't it time you took your fly fishing to the next level? The renowned Wulff School on the famous Beaverkill River is ready to take your reservation for Spring 2010. Sheila Hassan, director.

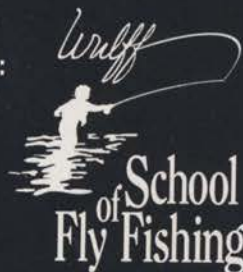
COURSES OFFERED:

Trout School:
May 14-16, June 4-6, June 25-27, Sep 17-19

Techniques of Fly Casting:
Apr 30 - May 2, May 21-23, Jun 18-20 (advanced)

Casting Instructors' School:
May 3-5

Information and Reservations:
Phone: 845-439-5020
Fax: 845-439-8055
PO Box 948
Livingston Manor, NY 12758
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wulffschool@pronetisp.net



Mayan ruins, which stand on a bluff facing the rising sun. The spectacular Caribbean views are appealing because Tulum means "wall" in Mayan and there were not many walled cities here, making this a unique experience.

The Coba Ruins, Punta Laguna and Cenote Tour are oriented around two lagoons. Stone and plaster roads move along the monkey reserve of Punta Laguna. As you walk around a beautiful lagoon in the jungle, the monkeys jump

from tree-to-tree above your head. Visit the Coba archaeological site with a professional guide, and rent bicycles to explore the jungle and see the highest pyramid of the Yucatan peninsula. Finish the tour by swimming in Zacil, a crystal clear blue hole.

The Sian Ka'an Biosphere Reserve is a 1.3 million acre area that features Muyil as a post-classic city with buildings that date back to 1100 AD. This unique site even has numerous subterranean chambers and has a different feel from other Mayan sites in the Yucatan.

Located on Grand Bahama, **H2Obonefishing** has been fishing the flats since 2000. You'll find a combination of soft sand and grass to white sand and marl flats. While the average-size bonefish is between four and five pounds, the record fish caught here is a whopping 14.5 pounds. Permit are encountered every month of the year but are best targeted from April to September. A bonus to the bonefish and permit is the potential to catch migratory tarpon from May to September. Barracuda, snapper, jacks and tailing triggerfish are other commonly caught species. If you'd like to include some offshore action, schools of yellowfin tuna, blackfin tuna, skipjack and dorado are consistently available from April to September. Combine a morning of flats fishing and an afternoon offshore.

Rounding out this dynamic and exceptionally varied fishing program, H2Obonefishing also offers their "No Boundaries" program that makes use of a custom-rigged flats skiff. These skiffs enable a longer range and faster ride than the typically used 17-foot Mavericks. Fishing during the summertime is outstanding, and H2Obonefishing offers discounts on their fishing packages from July 1 through September 30.

H2Obonefishing's location is adjacent to Count Basie Square, the island's main entertainment area. It'll literally take only a minute to walk to the square, where you'll be in the middle of island entertainment. Foodies can choose from the 18 restaurants, which offer just about every culinary style. For nightlife, there are several bars that are within walking distance. If you've got a little 007 in you, head to the new casino, another two minute walk away. Just make sure you leave a winner.

The world-famous Underwater Explorer's Society is situated next door. Here you can find skin- and scuba-diving galore. From lessons to rentals to trips, the UES offers it all. One noteworthy trip is the



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF YELLOWDOGFLYFISHING.COM

Dolphin Experience, on which guests can swim with Atlantic-bottlenose dolphins. Trips are short or long and can be as simple as watching the dolphins or as involved as working with a trainer to feed and train them.

At H2Obonefishing, convenience is king. All water sports depart from the marina that's a stone's throw from the waterfront. Boats leave the docks and offer parasailing, glass-bottom-boat tours and sailing. Ocean kayaks

and Jet Skis are available, as well. If you've had enough of the water, head inland on a Jeep tour, a tropical bird-watching expedition or comb the beaches for shells. And if that doesn't suit you, then lay out on one of the private beaches or by one of the three pools.

The fact that **El Pescador Lodge** on Ambergris Caye in Belize is run by three generations of the Spiro family tells you that the lodge is well-managed. Add the fact that well-known fly-fisher Lori-Ann Murphy spearheads the fishing program and you can be sure the fishing will receive top billing. The British began settling Belize in the 1600s and English is the country's native language. Since 1974, El Pescador's reputation as a year-round destination for completing the Holy Grail of tropical saltwater fly-fishing, the bonefish, permit and tarpon Grand Slam, is solid. June through September is prime time for migratory tarpon.

In addition to the individual lodge rental rooms, eight villas are available to accommodate entire families. El Pescador can host a total of 72 guests, so no worries about considering an offsite business meeting at the resort. The lodge is surrounded by beach and lagoon, and there are two saltwater, and one freshwater, pools.

Try snorkeling or scuba-diving along the barrier reef or in the Hol Chan Marine Park, an underwater sanctuary. History buffs will enjoy exploring the Altun Ha Mayan Ruins; wildlife and nature tours take your group to the Belize Zoo, the Crooked Tree Bird Sanctuary or to see the West Indian manatee. And how about cave tubing—where you float in an inner tube through a rainforest and into caves with stalagmites and crystal formations. Golf, tennis, catamaraning, snorkeling and day spas are also popular on the island. The lodge tell us "From June 1 to Dec 18, 2010, we're running our '2 Heads for 1' special on our standard non-activity packages and our fishing packages. On this special, the first guest comes for the single occupancy in a beachfront room (and single angler) price and the second guest sharing his room (and boat/guide) is free.

For an exclusive list of contact info for the travel resources profiled in this piece, please go to flyrodreel.com Travel section.