

# Five Steps to a Successful Fishing Vacation

By Pete Greenan - CBOG

## The First Step

*Take into consideration your ability, financial wherewithal and a target species or location.*

If you are not an experienced two handed spey caster you might not choose a Scotland or Russian trip for salmon. A little introspection will help you decide what you are capable of and whether or not you are ready for a particularly difficult species or an expensive location. If you don't think you can handle a 100 lb. fish, you might not want to fish for giant tarpon or sailfish. That being said, you can prepare for any of the above or any other species or location with proper practice. If you want to fish for steelhead in British Columbia you would want to learn to use a two-handed rod, do some research into the best rivers, guides or lodges and read about the techniques needed for success. Big fish may require some time at the gym or working with a trainer to bulk up. When considering a once in a life time trip to a remote location or for a particular species, understand the cost of the trip is usually more than a stated rate plus travel costs. I have found that most trips cost 20% to 30% more than I estimated. You don't want to leave yourself short of money. For instance, a trip to Andros Island for bonefish may have an added cost if you want to go to the west side of the island; an extra \$50 or \$100. Most important is deciding what you can and cannot do. For instance, can you effectively wade a river or stand on the bow of a flats boat? Opt for a trip that allows you to fish comfortably and without danger.

## The Second Step

*Choose a companion carefully.*

Most of us like to fish with friends or family. However, you would not want to share quarters or a boat with someone you don't get along with very well. You should also consider your mates ability and physical limitations. Are they equal to yours? Would fishing with that person prevent you from doing all the things you want? You may be able to hike a mountain trail for four hours on a pack back trip but can your buddy? Can he/she cast well enough to not miss the best opportunities of the trip? Will your partner be able to cover his costs well enough? When using guides and lodges double occupancy keeps costs down but sometimes it's more fun to explore alone. It is more expensive but often more rewarding.

## The Third Step

*When should you go?*

Every location, species and environment has a prime time and a shoulder time. When doing your research look for the best season, moon phase, migration period or weather conditions. The shoulder season offers better rates but the fishing may not be at its best. Plan far enough ahead so you'll be able

to book the trip on the days you want. Call or e-mail lodges and outfitters to find the best times. Talk to friends who may have been there and read all the articles and books you can. Utilize all the resources on the internet like chat rooms, forums, etc. Delving into the nitty-gritty of a venue can save time and money.

## The Fourth Step

*Be prepared.*

Now it is time to think about your gear. You've made your decision on where and when to go but what do you bring? Do you have appropriate rods? How many should you take? Have you used them regularly? Do you need reels with a strong drag and large capacity or extra spools? Are your lines in tip-top shape? You wouldn't bring a bonefish line for Alaskan rainbows or visa-versa. Do you have the right leaders and do you have enough to cover all circumstances? Have you practiced the knots you'll need? Are you wading? Wet or dry? Think about the appropriate clothing. You may need a super rain jacket or a wide brimmed hat or breathable shirts or silk long johns or all of the above. Will you be tying the flies you need on site? You'll need a travel kit for that. If you need more equipment, can you purchase it in the location you going to or do you have to carry everything you need with you. What about food & water? Is it available, supplied or do you have to fend for yourself? How about emergencies? What do you do if you step on a sting ray or fall in an icy stream? I can't say enough about medicine. Be absolutely sure you have everything you need; sunscreen, Neosporin, band-aids, prescriptions, etc. Each location will have its special needs and not covering them can ruin a fun trip. Most important is practice. Practice casting with the rods you are going to use. No one goes to the Super Bowl before they play Pop Warner. Use casting instructors whenever possible. They can fine tune your casts so you won't miss any opportunities because you couldn't get the fly to the fish.

## The Fifth Step

*Consider your options.*

There are three methods I take into consideration when planning a special fishing trip.

The first is commonly called DIY or Do-It-Yourself. I'm a fairly knowledgeable angler and have advanced casting skills. This means I can cut my costs and still have a wonderful time. I can also tie the flies I need and make the knots I'll be using. I am fortunate to have many friends who I consider peers when it comes to fishing. As a Federation of Fly Fishers member I can utilize contacts all over the world. They will help me be ready and may even enjoy a visit or a day of fishing. Making new friends is part of any fun trip. I will choose this type of trip as often as I can.

The second method I might choose is to go on a "Hosted Trip" with one of the many Federators that arrange package fishing vacations. I would always choose a Federator because I know they are well trained and very well experienced. The Host would inform you of the things you need to bring, the rod,

reel and fly selection, what the cost is and what the options are. He/she will be able to suggest the best flights, times and locations. And they will be able to offer a trip in your budget. I suggest this for the slightly less adventurous angler. Being with a group introduces you to like-minded friends who may become your best fishing pal in the future. Also, there is safety in numbers.

The third method to consider is going with a lodge or outfitter. These trips are usually a bit pricier but you have the security of an operation with extensive knowledge and a financial interest in your enjoyment and well being. They want you back. Here again you'll be informed of all you need to bring and all the expenses in advance. Most lodges or outfitters of any size are also insured. That means more security for you. This type of trip is excellent for a first time single angler. You will be able to determine if you really like exotic fishing vacations and what method will work for you. Opt for the lodges and outfitters recommended by the Federation of Fly Fishers if you can. These companies have been vetted and have been shown to be responsible businesses.

So, to recap, it is important that you give a lot of thought to your trip. Asking friends what experiences they enjoyed the most will lead them to tell you some horror stories. Don't believe them all. Most trips, if not to a country that is at war, are fun and exciting. The better prepared you are the more comfortable you will feel. Being better prepared relieves those intrepid feelings and adds pure excitement to your adventure. Consider taking your first trips to one of the many fine fishing venues in the United States. Fishing the great eastern smallmouth streams is an inexpensive fun trip. Have you been to one of the old lodges in northern Maine? How about bass fishing in Florida or Texas? That would be fun. All you freshwater anglers might enjoy and saltwater trip and visa-versa. What excites you the most; bonefish & tarpon; browns & rainbows, smallies & pike or panfish & bass? Do you like to wade rivers, flats or ponds? How about a kayak trip? You see, the possibilities are endless. Whatever you decide, remember is recreation. So.. take time to re-create yourself and have fun.

I hope this article helps pique your interest in a fishing adventure. In the near future I will be writing short articles on preparing for specific locations. These will help you prepare for one particular venue or species.

Fish Hard,

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