



A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

THE ANGLING REPORT

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DATELINE: SPAIN

Discovery Report Found! A Guide Who Knows The Pyrenees

(Editor Note: Northern Spain is a great place to visit already, but add great fly fishing to the mix and you have a real winner. We are indebted to subscriber Marinus Heer for the following report of a guide there who can put you on waters where you won't see another angler all day.)

The Pyrenees Mountains form a natural border between France and Spain, separating the Iberian Peninsula from the rest of continental Europe. They extend about 267 miles from the Bay of Biscay in the West to the Mediterranean Sea on the eastern coast of the peninsula. Wild and unspoiled, the Pyrenees are home to innumerable rivers and glacial lakes populated with wild trout. It is here, in the Spanish Pyrenees, where subscriber Marinus Heer tells us he has fished 30 days a year for the past seven years with a guide named Iván Tarín of a company called Salvelinus (www.sal

velinus.com), the Latin name for the salmonid genus. Tarín chose the name Salvelinus after the brook trout that inhabit various Pyrenean rivers.

Heer is a Dutchman living in Mallorca, and he initially did not want to talk about Tarín, even with the editors of *The Angling Report*. However, he says that he has now fished so often with Tarín that he con-



siders him a good friend and wants to help him find new clients. Not too many of them, mind you, because the waters he knows can not take a lot of pressure.

Tarín is a 30-something entrepreneur who has spent his life on the rivers in the Pyrenees. He operates what he touts as Spain's first fishing lodge

dedicated solely to fly anglers. He also runs a fly fishing school and guide service. He is based in the autonomous community (state) of Aragon, where a large section of the Pyrenees is located. The word "aragon" means region of water courses, and the area lives up to its name with more than 15 rivers and 30 glacial lakes within only a 30-mile radius of the Aragon Valley. Tarín fishes 70 different canyons and more than 800 miles of mid- and lower stretch waters, in addition to many lakes. Most of the rivers are medium-sized, and their characteristics change depending on the elevation. At their sources, they are typical high-altitude streams with large rocks and fast rapids. The mid-sections are more comfortable to fish, with some rocks, rapids and pools of slack water from 10 to 15 yards wide. The lower reaches are slower and suitable for wading at two to six feet in depth. The streams are typically about 90 yards across at the lower levels.

As for still waters, Tarín has explored more than 60 of the 400 high-altitude and glacier lakes in the region. Some lakes are accessible by foot; others solely by helicopter at elevations of 6,500 to 9,800 feet. Low to non-existent fishing pressure means the trophy browns there are eager to take flies. Because the waters in these lakes are so clear, anglers can see as far as five meters down. The fishing here is sightcasting to fish that ascend to take a fly.

Although all waters in Spain are public, Heer says Tarín fishes in places no one else goes. Some of the waters he guides are within protected areas, including UNESCO-designated biosphere reserves and national parks. Tarín has secured special permits from the Government of Aragon that



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IN THIS ISSUE

Maine

Wilderness Fishing At
Baxter State Park
PAGES 3 - 6

Central America

A New Lodge In Panama.
Plus, A Guatemala Update
PAGES 6 - 9

Los Roques

Charter Crash Causes
A Flight Service Shortage
PAGE 9

US West

Good News On Fishing
Conditions This Summer
PAGE 11

Subscriber-Written Reports

Quebec, Rhode Island, Argentina, Zambia,
Alaska, More. Plus A Controversy.
PAGES 12 - 17

International News Snippets

New Lodges In The Bahamas, Guatemala
and Venezuela. Plus, Subscriber Feedback
PAGES 17 - 18

THE ANGLING REPORT

allow him to drive on restricted forest tracks in order to access remote areas.

Some of these require a 1½ hour drive by 4wd vehicle. In other areas, a 15-

Honor Roll Subscribers

■ The *Angling Report* encourages subscribers to file reports on great places to fish and/or 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 are sent a complimentary *Angling Report* Honor Roll Fishing Cap. If you have been on an interesting trip recently, send in a letter-length report and see if you can get on our Subscriber Honor Roll. Our newest Honor Roll Subscriber is **Marinus Heer** for his report on fishing the Pyrenees Mountains in Spain that begins on page 1 of this issue. Our other Honor Roll Subscribers are:

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THE ANGLING REPORT

minute hike from the main road is sufficient. Even the helicopter fly-ins don't have to take long. Some flights take only 10 minutes to deliver anglers to the other side of a 9,800-foot peak in order to fish a mountain lake.

Tarín keeps tabs on the many waters in his area with a team of six guides who continually scout the waters they fish. All of his guides are fly fishermen with a minimum of five years guiding experience in the Pyrenees, some up to 25 years experience. They speak English and French, in addition to Spanish.

Much of the fishing in the Pyrenees involves stalking sighted fish. An abundance of insects hatch from April until September, making dry flies very effective. Among the patterns that work here are mayflies and caddis, attractors, varied terrestrials and stoneflies. Although he says the potential is there to catch lots of fish, Tarín says anglers who come to the Pyrenees should be focused on the quality of experience and not numbers. "This destination is for the fisherman who delights in understanding the fish he is stalking and figuring out the conditions under which they can be caught," Tarín says. Heer echoes him, warning that anglers should not expect to hurry through a river and land a bunch of fish. That said, Tarín says it's possible to have double-digit days.

The fish that inhabit the Pyrenees include brook trout, brown trout and rainbow trout. Native browns are the most common species and live in lakes and all stretches of rivers. They can run from 25 to 30 inches long in some areas, but typically run from eight to 22 inches, depending on the water and section. In the headwaters of several mountain rivers, a skilled angler can catch brookies up to 14 inches in length. The rainbows were introduced to the western Pyrenees in the 1970s. These can be found in high mountain rivers and run from 12 to 20 inches. Tarín says it is typical for skilled clients to catch more than 15 rainbows in one day.

As for the Salvelinus Lodge, it is a converted 15th Century monastery in a small Pyrenean village named Santa Cilia, about seven miles from the town of Jaca. It is located on the banks of the River Aragon and very close to the confluence of two other large rivers. Tarín says there are more than 800 miles of rivers and 30 high-mountain lakes within a 30-mile radius of the lodge. The place features five refurbished bedrooms with private baths. There's also a wader room, a fly tying workshop, book and video library, outdoor casting area and on-site fly shop. The shop offers a selection of more than 6,000 flies suitable for the surrounding waters, along with other quality gear from brand-name



fly lines to Orvis waders and Simms jackets. Anglers can test and purchase a wide variety of gear.

For non-anglers, Tarín can arrange for numerous activities ranging from tours of historic castles and churches to golf, horseback riding and nature hikes. There are even activities for children and nanny services.

Tarín offers an eight-day package that provides 7½ days of fishing in high mountain streams, spring creeks and the middle and lower reaches of various streams. One helicopter fly-out is included for a day of high-mountain lake fishing, a service Tarín says he pioneered in Spain. Each guide is equipped with a satellite phone for safety purposes. Seven days are nowhere enough to completely explore any one aspect of this region, but Tarín says he has designed an itinerary that gives anglers a taste of

the fly fishing possibilities available in the Pyrenees. The season runs from March through October. The best time to enjoy dry fly fishing is May to September. High mountain fishing is best from July through August.

The rate for an eight-day package is 3,300 Euros per angler (\$5,170 at press time). That assumes there are two anglers per guide. One-on-one guiding is available for an additional 75 Euros (\$118) per day. The non-angler rate with five days of activities is 2,200 Euros (\$3,447). There is also a daily rate available at 500 Euros for anglers (\$783) and 350 Euros (\$548) for non-anglers with a two-day minimum. Rates include meet-and-greet at the Pamplona Airport, transportation to the lodge by light aircraft, lodging and meals, open bar, guiding, one helicopter transfer, fishing licenses and permits, plus insurance. Novices and beginners also receive instruction.

(Postscript: We are putting Marinus Heer on our Subscriber Honor Roll for sharing the information in this report with fellow subscribers. See page 2 for more details on our Subscriber Honor Roll.)

DATELINE: MAINE

Trip-Planning File Wilderness Fishing At Baxter State Park

(Editor Note: If you're looking for a true wilderness fishing experience without leaving the US, correspondent Al Raychard says Maine's Baxter State Park is the place to visit.)

If you don't mind roughing it a bit in exchange for quality fishing, you'll find a real treasure in Maine's Baxter State Park. Located west of the town of Millinocket in north-central Maine, Baxter has 200 miles of maintained trails that not only take you to the top of some of Maine's highest summits and through some of the Northeast's wildest places, but also to some of the finest remote native brook trout waters in the United States.