

Chile Report

Chile
Argentina

Patagonian BaseCamp

El Saltamontes

Patagonia Trouters

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ALL HAD EPIC SEASONS!

End of Season Chile Report, El Saltamontes, Patagonian BaseCamp, and Trouters Patagonia

It's May, and as we here in the Northern Hemisphere look forward to the approach of spring, our lodges in Chile have just sent the last of their guests home happy and with memories for a lifetime. El Saltamontes, Patagonian BaseCamp, and Trouters Patagonia all had epic seasons, with great weather for most of their summers translating into many weeks of the stellar dry fly fishing both destinations are famous for. As usual, guests returning from their first-time Chilean experience were astonished not only with the fishing,

but the stunningly beautiful scenery, as well. If you have never experienced the visually dramatic geography of Chilean Patagonia, you owe it to yourself to get down there. It has been described as "the wilderness with no teeth," due to its endless tracts of spectacular backcountry and almost total lack of poisonous snakes and spiders, mosquitoes, or large animals that pose a threat to humans. It is very close to being the perfect destination, for many traveling anglers!



El Saltamontes Chile had a big winter in 2017, with lots of snow that translated into high-but-clear waters in El Saltamontes' first few weeks; so high that guides even sometimes floated the home water, the Nireguao! For a small river that can normally be waded across at many points, this was a first...but guides adapted, and found that the fish would still eat large beetle dry flies, and bead head nymphs suspended below them. As normal, with the onset of early summer the river flows unmetted, and by early February the river was at normal flows and fish were keyed into the hordes of streamside grasshoppers; this lasted until the lodge closed up in late March.

While there are miles of private and highly productive rivers and creeks on the 5,000-acre El Saltamontes ranch, the guides here have also been successfully seeking out new fishing venues outside the property. As of this season there are 35 different fishing beats spread out all over the country, including a variety of rivers, streams, small creeks (with big fish), lakes, and lagunas (smaller, shallow lakes). Remember, this wealth of options is spread out among just 10 anglers a week, assuring you will always be on fresh water, and that there is more than enough variety of water to satisfy the most demanding angling palate. And lest you are tempted to grimace at the thought of fishing stillwater, understand that a lot of the lakes are fished with large foam beetle patterns, and it is not un-



usual to see a steady procession of big browns rising up through crystal clear, shallow water to crush the dry. One lake even has a glass-walled cabin on the hillside overlooking the water, a perfect place to sit and eat lunch midday. Another shallow laguna is known for fewer but larger fish, where it is not unusual to hook fish in the 20-26-inch range, heavy-bodied brutes that are clearly not missing many meals. But as usual, it was the smaller walk-and-wade streams that stole the show at Saltamontes. Daily, guides would lead their clients to miles of grass-draped meadow streams, wood-choked creeks, and even up tiny tributaries that would appear too small to hold anything but tiny fish...yet all held beautiful browns and rainbows in the 15-20-inch range, with the occasional shocker stretching the two-foot mark. In short, it was yet another memorable season at "the grasshopper lodge"!



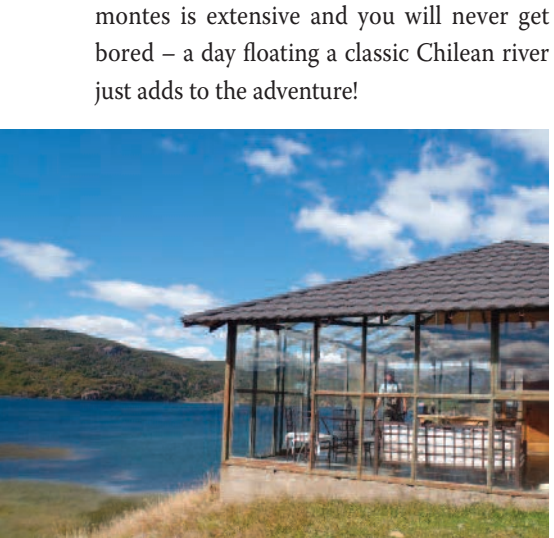
WHAT MAKES EL SALTAMONTES LODGE UNIQUE & SPECIAL

▲ The lodge is located on a huge private ranch in the foothills of the Andes. There are miles of private water that can only be accessed by guests of the lodge. This means guests get to daily fish water loaded with wild trout, fish that see few anglers and love dry flies, especially grasshopper and large beetle patterns. Your own private dry fly Shangri-La!

▲ The best hopper fishing in Chile! Guests catch most fish on large foam dry flies. Unlike many places where hoppers are only occasionally effective, here it is what you fish almost exclusively. Flies float high and are easy to see, and the fish never seem to get tired of them. And it seems hoppers always bring the largest fish in the river to the surface.

▲ El Saltamontes is a beautifully-appointed lodge, with great guides, incredible food, and superb service. Guests enjoy long days fishing with some of the best teaching guides in the country, return to a meal that is the rival of the finest restaurant, and then return to their room to relax in comfort every evening after dinner and drinks. You leave El Saltamontes relaxed, refreshed and a better angler at the end of the week.

▲ There is an option to float a larger river for a day, for those wanting to take a break from wading. This river is beautiful, alternately running through heavy forest and open steppe country, giving anglers a real feel for Patagonia. You will be casting large dries and trout that often eat aggressively and make long runs. The diversity of fisheries accessed from El Saltamontes is extensive and you will never get bored – a day floating a classic Chilean river just adds to the adventure!



Patagonian BaseCamp Marcel and Carolina Sijnesael's beautiful lodge in the Palena province experienced its single best season ever for trophy trout in 2018, with anglers landing fairly ridiculous numbers of browns and rainbows in excess of the two-foot mark. Their rivers were also affected by the big runoff in early season (December and early January), but because their rivers are larger and fish well in a wide variety of conditions – and because they have such a wealth of different rivers, streams and lagunas to choose from – their guests did well even in early season, landing large numbers of huge trout. Especially noteworthy all season long were the big numbers of trophy browns landed on the lodge's home water, the Rio Palena...and even more exciting was that most were caught on dry and dropper rigs, unlike the streamer fishing that has for so long dominated the fishing there. Watching heavy-shouldered brown trout as long as your arm rise up through several feet of water to engulf your #6 Chubby Chernobyl dry fly never gets old! Remember, Patagonian BaseCamp is custom-tailored to anglers who prefer to float and fish. They have pioneered



access to many rivers that can only be fished via boats, and guests cast big foam dries to miles of streambanks that hold large brown and rainbow trout. Floating their wider rivers is the best way to put your fly in front of the most fish, and the most large fish. And because Marcel has spared no expense acquiring the finest (largely Rocky Mountain) guide staff in Chile - combined with his impressive fleet of catarafts, rafts, jet boats and drift boats - guests get the benefit of a familiar guide experience, located in an exciting, untouched locale. Anglers will learn techniques from these guides that will serve them in trout rivers anywhere in the world, and never experience a communication challenge with your guide!

New for 2018 was the opening of the lodge's exciting deluxe outcamp, Rio Escondido. This privately-owned wilderness gem encompasses a 5-mile river valley, surrounded by high mountain peaks, cascading waterfalls, and more fishing options than you can imagine... and they still have not tried all the creeks and lakes on the property! Perfect for the physically fit angler who can hike, wade and fish miles of the Rio Escondido and its small tributaries, this place is special. Each day anglers have the opportunity to cast over browns and rainbows that have rarely, if ever, seen a fly...and some of them have reached impressive dimensions in this idyllic lifestyle.

Whether it was fishing the Rio Figueroa and Rio Pico out of the spectacular Temple Camp, the headwaters of the Palena from the Narnia-like Isla Leon Camp, Rio Escondido from the camp of the same name, or choosing a new river to float each day from the luxury of the main lodge, 2018 will go down as one of the best seasons ever at Patagonian BaseCamp!

WHAT MAKES PATAGONIAN BASECAMP UNIQUE & SPECIAL

▲ The lodge is located in a very remote and visually spectacular part of Chilean Patagonia; you will fish daily on rivers that get almost no outside pressure, in jaw-droppingly beautiful surroundings. Such little pressure on the fisheries assures guests of ample opportunities to cast dry flies over happy and hungry trout.

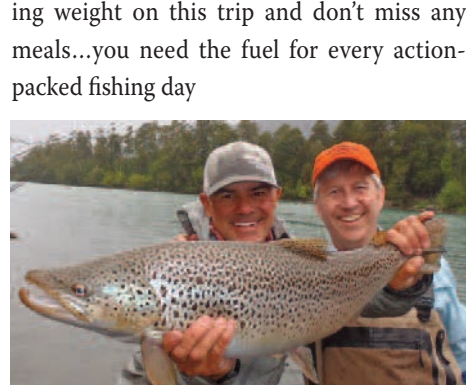
▲ Owner Marcel Sijnesael has built numerous comfortable overnight camps on various rivers, into a vast wilderness area, overnight in relative luxury far from any civilization, then



float and fish out the following day, finding themselves back at the lodge that night. Guests can experience true Patagonia wilderness solitude without sacrificing the creature comforts of a world-class lodge.

▲ Despite its remote location, the lodge is wonderfully appointed, with rooms, comfortable accommodations (with options for private rooms), hot tub, and a sauna. Coming back to the lodge each night is something to look forward to! Guests will sleep in large beds with comfy, padded comforters, beautiful picture window bathers, beautiful even do your laundry as often as you would like. You'll be royally waited on and in very capable hands...the lodge staff will take care of the logistics of the trip, so all you have to do is fish to your heart's content.

▲ Marcel's wife, Carolina, is a trained chef, and the lodge adheres to a farm-to-table meal plan; the masterpieces Caro creates daily are made even better by the fact all the ingredients are local, and many are from the surrounding farm. Meals here are absolutely delectable, and memorable! This is farm fresh food that tastes delicious and is also healthy. Don't plan on losing weight on this trip and don't miss any meals...you need the fuel for every action-packed fishing day



Patagonia Trouters Nico Gonzalez and his crew of long-time Coyhaique region guides are renowned for their ability to tap the endless array of fishing – from tiny creeks to large rivers to gin-clear mountain trophy fish lakes – in the area, always finding the best fishing regardless of the weather or water conditions. Because Nico has great stillwater fishing very early in the season, he was the first of the lodges to open his doors last year, in the month of November, 2017. We had several clients that wrote back excited that they had landed the largest brown trout of their lives, fish that sometimes surpassed the two foot mark! As soon as the snowpack-induced higher flows receded in January, they began fishing all their normal creeks and rivers – the Simpson, Manihuales and Aysen river floats, and a litany of smaller walk and wade creeks and streams. The high water early turned into perfect healthy flows right through the heart of their summer months, which translated to even better than usual dry fly fishing with large foam beetles and hoppers. As their season began to cool down in early March, anglers experienced the normal smaller mayfly hatches daily, some of which brought up every large trout in the rivers. Finally, in late March and April the king salmon began to spawn in some rivers, acting as a magnet for trout from miles around. Fishing behind these big tanks reminds one a bit of Alaska, except these trout will often eat a big dry fly, or a dry and dropper!

With their new and comfortable lodge, wealth of fishing options, and willingness to take anglers for less than full-week trips, Trouters had another stellar season, and proved why they are the operation to choose if you want quality and variety in the Coyhaique area, with a lodge atmosphere that makes guests feel like a part of the family.



WHAT MAKES PATAGONIAN BASECAMP UNIQUE & SPECIAL

▲ La Reserva Lodge is a new facility, located on a scenic overlook near the local community of Coyhaique and specifically designed and built for anglers. Guests arrive quickly from the regional airport and stay in modern, well-appointed rooms with every amenity you would expect in a world-class fishing lodge. Travel to Trouters Patagonia is easy, simple and once you are in the capable hands of the Gonzalez family, you won't have to worry about anything, except catching trout, eating well, and relaxing – now that's a vacation!

▲ Unlike most local fly fishing lodges, Trouters Patagonia is happy to host anglers for less than full week-long stays with no set arrival and/or departure days. This makes it the perfect destination to add to other lodge stays, or for those who are in the country for other reasons and simply want to add several fishing days to their travel schedule. Travel to and from Trouters doesn't get much easier, which lets you concentrate on enjoying a wonderful fly fishing holiday without needing to adhere to specific turnaround days.

▲ Trouters' fishing program is famous for its diversity, and can accommodate angler's wishes regardless of whether they prefer wading or float fishing. Guests can find themselves stalking big trout in a small stream on foot one day, and casting big foam dries to the banks of a larger river from a comfortable raft the next. There are no down days here; every day is a fishing day. No matter what the weather and conditions, the guides will have you fishing in productive water every day of your stay.

▲ Owner and head guide Nico Gonzalez is a local, born and raised in Patagonia, and a cut his teeth fishing his local waters as a young boy. Nico is one of the original Chilean fly fishing guides in this part of the world, and he knows this country like no other, able to find you fish when other cannot. Put that local knowledge and experience to work for you and take the opportunity of your stay – fishing with Nico and his guides means you will be fishing daily on the best local waters, at the best possible times.

▲ La Reserva Lodge offers top-of-the-line rental gear – waders, wading boots, fly rods and reels. For those not wanting to bring their own fly fishing kit all the way to Patagonia, Trouters has you covered. Take the hassle out of packing and lugging all your gear down to South America and let Trouters outfit you, head to toe.

▲ Trouters is a small operation, accommodating a maximum of 8 guests at a time. This is no big corporate lodge, but a family-run operation where personal attention and flexibility in the daily fishing program is the norm. Your fly fishing trip will be custom tailored to your wants and needs, and you will go home with wonderful memories, and as a new member of the Gonzalez family.

If you are considering a trip to Chilean Patagonia for the 2018/2019 season, we still have prime space available at all three lodges. Drop an email to Mike Mercer (mercerc@theflyshop.com) or Pat Pendergast (pat@theflyshop.com), or give us a call at 800-669-3474. We would love to talk with you about the nuances of all operations, and help choosing the lodge best suited for your lodging and fishing preferences.

All the best fishing,
Mike Mercer and Pat Pendergast

Don't delay. Give us a call or email Mike Mercer today!
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