

PATAGONIA

AUSSIE FLY FISHER

ARGENTINA'S FINEST SEA-RUN BROWN AND BROOK TROUT FISHERY





SOUTHERN PATAGONIA, ARGENTINA

WHERE

Vast, open alpine landscapes, Southern Patagonia is devastatingly beautiful at every turn.

This massive region, famed for its glaciers and jagged mountain peaks, sprawls across approximately 400,000 square miles of Chile and Argentina. Patagonia occupies roughly half the landmass of each country and is one of the least densely populated regions on the planet. Here, you'll feel like you're truly at "the end of the earth."

Guests can experience two vast regions, starting with the Rio Grande in Tierra Del Fuego. The Rio Grande flows from west to east, from the Andes to the Atlantic Ocean through approximately 60 miles of Argentine territory.

The landscape of Tierra del Fuego is reminiscent of Wyoming or the Scottish low country. It includes sparsely populated wilderness, large sheep farming estancias, wild herds of llama-like Guanacos, plentiful red fox populations and soaring condors. Most importantly, Rio Grande is home to the best wild sea-run brown trout fishery in the world and Villa Maria Lodge is located only a few miles upstream from the South Atlantic sea affording guests with first opportunity to capture these incredible animals as they migrate up into the rivers every year. Think double-handed rods, swinging large deceivers for trophy sea-run browns.

From there, Guests have the opportunity to add Estancia Rio Pelke where guests enjoy private access to the 5 best Brook and Brown trout rivers in the Santa Cruz Province. This added segment of the tour requires anglers to change strategy, swapping out double handers for your 5 weight, accessing spring creeks with dry flies and streamers in crystal clear tight quarters.

WHAT

The primary segment of the tour is 6 days, 7 nights with Villa Maria Lodge at Rio Grande, followed by the opportunity to add 3 – 5 days at Estancia Rio Pelke (pictured).





VILLA MARIA LODGE JAN 3 – 10, 2025

The trip begins with Villa Maria Lodge. Villa María is the second of the De Las Carreras family lodges to open on the Río Grande after Kau Tapen and has offered small private groups exciting fishing on some of the most productive pools in the lower river since 1994.

Villa María offers anglers the first opportunity at newly arrived Sea Trout on the lower Río Grande. For fishermen who enjoy the challenges and rewards of two-handed rods, this is a dream come true! With friendly and dedicated house staff and guides, Villa María is very well suited to caring for small groups.

The Rio Grande has become the most productive sea-run brown trout fishery in the world. While trout numbers annually fluctuate with conditions in the river and at sea, a fish or two a day is the norm, and 6 to 8 fish days are a regular occurrence.

GETTING THERE

Guests fly into Buenos Aires, Argentina, and typically spend overnight there with a day to spend touring this wonderful city.

Arrival day at Villa María is set for Friday (January 3, 2025). Commercial airlines fly from Buenos Aires to the airport of Rio Grande (3-hour flight), where a VM lodge representative will meet us. The transfer from Rio Grande airport to the lodge takes 30 minutes. On arrival at the lodge, guests are welcomed with cocktails by the entire Villa Maria staff.





WHY VILLA MARIA LODGE?

- Intimate lodge setting with space for only 6 anglers and private access to 20km of the best fly water on the lower Río Grande, an exclusive haven for small groups of discerning anglers.
- A Spey angler's paradise! Long, low-gradient pools equal less casting and more fishing.
- The longest pools with Sea-Run Trout fresh from the sea.
- Anglers fish new beats each morning and evening.
- Extensive beat options make it possible to find pools where wind assists vs hinders the angler's casting.
- Arrival day begins with an evening warm-up session.
- Maximize your time on the river! VM has a gorgeous river house (pictured) for lunch and siestas so you can fish more and drive less, while enjoying a stunning setting in the wilds of Tierra del Fuego.
- Premium lodge services and hospitality, exquisite a la carte menu and five-star accommodations — the reasons why more than 80% of anglers are repeat guests.
- A mix of the world's best sea-run brown trout guides, both local and international, to make sure we combine local knowledge with world-class technique. Guides rotate daily, so you'll get to fish with them all.
- Superb fishing gear and leading fishing equipment, available at no extra cost.





FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Though it appears to be a traditional ranch structure on the outside, make no mistake that Villa María Lodge is a modern, comfortable fishing lodge in every way today with 6 ensuite double and single rooms, smart furnishings, and spacious living areas.

Delightful meals are prepared daily by the lodge's dedicated chef, so you will fish each day well fed ready for battle with the Río Grande's giant trout.

Each evening, a roaring fire and well-stocked bar will welcome you back from the day's adventures.

The lodge has a tackle shop stocked with Loop rods, quality reels, flies, lines, clothing, and other on and off water gifts and essentials.

In addition, guests have the full use of the lodge's fly-tying table and gear storage rooms.

WIFI is available within both, the main and river lodges.





FACILITIES AND SERVICES (continued)

- Capacity: 6 rods.
- Rooms: 6 Bedrooms (3 en suite double rooms and 1 single in the Main House, plus 2 single en suite queen bedrooms in the Annex).
- Main House: Dining room, sitting room, bar, wader/ gear room, and fully equipped fly-tying table. Annex: sitting room and mud room for gear/waders. § Gourmet Dining with Argentina's famed beef and fine wines, traditional Asados (BBQs), and delicious desserts.
- Professional Guides, who can give casting instructions with single and two-handed rods (Spey casting).
- Fly Shop fully equipped with flies, rods, reels, lines, suitable fishing clothing, and Argentine crafts.
- Comfortable crew cab 4-wheel trucks, fitted with rod racks and radios.
- Full maid service with laundry service available.
- bird watching and rich wildlife (Condors, foxes and guanacos).





And if one lodge was not enough, Villa María also boasts a day lodge on the riverbank that is utilized to augment the daily fishing rotation.

The day lodge is a small house with three rooms, including two queen-bedded rooms for midday siestas.

Guests use the day lodge each afternoon, and doing so increases the fishing time and allows our anglers a place to relax at midday.

Anglers may also choose to keep right on fishing after enjoying midday lunches that may include steaks or lamb cooked over open coals.





ESTANCIA JOSÉ MENÉNDEZ

Villa María stands out immediately as a bright white building located in the heart of a cluster of buildings that is the José Menéndez Estancia.

This ranch has a storied history. It was the first property for ranching baron José Menéndez in Tierra del Fuego and began operation in 1894.

The ranch center was once a bustling village that supported enough family, laborers, shepards, and staff to run the vast sheep ranching operation that began on Tierra del Fuego's barren landscape.

The Menendez property also played host to a rather noted employee – slaughterhouse manager John Goodall – who first planted trout eggs in Tierra del Fuego's rivers in 1940. A true visionary!

Still surrounded by over 120,000 acres of grazing land, and still host to 40,000 sheep and 1500 head of cattle, the ranch property sits by the Río Grande and looks like a tidy movie set with white picket fences and colourful flower gardens.

The lodge building that is now Villa María was once the ranch manager's family home and has been completely renovated into a modern fishing lodge.





LOCATION

The lodge is located on the banks of the Río Grande, in Tierra del Fuego, Argentina, just a few miles above the tidal influence.

Starting with the opening of Kau Tapen Lodge in the early '80s, the Río Grande has become the most productive sea-run trout fishery in the world.

While trout numbers fluctuate with conditions at sea, tides, water levels, and a host of other natural factors – the fact is we release 20-pound trout at Villa María each week of the season.

A fish or two a day is the norm given average water conditions – but 6-8 fish days happen all the time! Anglers will fish both banks. Big pools and two-handed rods are the norms.

The lodge itself reminds many of the world's best salmon camps; warm, cozy, and accompanied by cuisine and service at a very high level.

Guides know the pools and the fish intimately. Days are spent on the water, with classic “huts” for midday breaks.

The Río Grande flows from west to east, down from the Andes to the Atlantic Ocean through approximately 60 miles of Argentine territory.

The landscape of Tierra del Fuego is reminiscent of Wyoming or the Scottish low country. It includes sparsely populated wilderness, large sheep farming estancias, and wild herds of llama-like Guanacos, as well as plentiful fox and condor populations.





THE FISHING

Our target species is Sea-Run Brown Trout, averaging 8lbs and weighing up to 30lbs.

Although most of their lives are spent in the ocean, sea-run brown trout seem to retain more of the eccentricities of resident browns than, for instance, steelhead do of resident rainbows. Moody fish, they must be shown flies the way they want to see them at the precise time they're ready to take.

The Río Grande isn't a big river. Thus, it's compatible with a wide range of techniques; critical since a large sea-run brown trout may demand that a fly be fed to it on the bottom one hour but rise to a skating fly the next.

Water levels can change from week to week and they generally drop as the season progresses. The river offers easy wading on fine gravel bottom.

Vary your presentations in each pool fished until you find the right formula of fly, line, drift or swing, and retrieve. Also heed the advice of your guide, whose primary aim is to recommend methods that will help you hook and bring more fish to the net.

By and large, the Río Grande's sea-run brown trout seem to lie near cut banks during the middle of the day, though in low water they will also lie in the faster necks of pools. They typically move into these areas during the early morning, evening, and nighttime hours.





VILLA MARIA DAILY ITINERARY

ARRIVAL AT VILLA MARIA LODGE: Friday 3 January, 2025

FISHING: 4 - 9 January (Inclusive)

DEPARTURE FROM VILLA MARIA LODGE: 10 January 2025

The typical trip does not fish on arrival or departure. Usually, you'll be shuttled from the airport to the lodge where you can check into your room, prepare gear, and spend an afternoon relaxing on the lodge grounds. Here is a sample schedule of the daily program:

- 8:00 am Breakfast
- 9:00 am Depart for fishing
- 1:00 pm Lunch and Siesta
- 5:00 pm Fish till dusk
- 11:00 pm Dinner

* Approximately 8-9 hours fishing daily. Fishing hours will change slightly depending on the season.





FLIES

From our experience, unless you frequent Rio Grande we recommend purchasing flies directly from the lodge for this trip as this fishery commands specific flies catering to the fishery. A basic list of flies however is below:

- Collie Dog tube flies (3½-4½" long, both aluminum and copper bodies, with hard plastic tubing and #4 wide-gape hooks).
- Sunray shadows in different sizes.
- Bunny leeches, Zonkers, Woolly Buggers (black/olive), articulated string leeches, with electric blue flash, on #2-4 hooks.
- Rubber-leg Girdle or Yuk Bugs (#4-12). Rubber-leg Wonder Bug (weighted).
- Bitch Creek nymphs (orange and black for preference, #4-12). Bead-head nymphs (Prince, Hare's Ear, etc. #10-14).





FLIES (continued)

Also: Traditional Atlantic salmon flies including the Green Highlander, Blue char, Temple dog. Hitch tube (Iceland) is also effective for full floating lines and waking flies. Bombers or other waking dry flies (natural deer hair, black-&-green on #8-12 hooks), for use drifted or with a hitch. Include 1 1/2- and 2-inch tube flies —very effective on the Rio Grande.

- The Green Machine is a killer—whether skating it with a riffle-hitch, on an intermediate polyleader, or on a sinking-tip or sinking shooting head. The Peacock (a Rio Grande staple, tied on #2-4 hooks) is working exceptionally well on fresh fish. Try stripping it fast on a full sinking-line or sink-tip.
- For the last hour of daylight, use black and purple for your leech. During the day, if the water is cold or high, or muddy, leeches are the most effective. Black, purple, black-and-yellow, black-and-red, black-and-silver, black-and-chartreuse, chartreuse, orange, white.

Note: Larger streamers should be weighted and tied on heavy hooks with large hook gapes. You can buy flies as well as back-up tackle at the lodge. But plan to include a selection from home.



GEAR LIST

Fishing Gear / Terminal Tackle / Clothing

Equipment suggestions detailed here stem from more than two decades of fly-fishing expertise on the Rio Grande.

- **Rods:** Over the years we've tested many rods on the Rio Grande. Two-handed, Spey-style rods are the No. 1 choice, although single-handed rods also work well during specific times. Light two-handed rods are increasingly popular. They allow you to cast longer distances with less effort—particularly when the wind blows. Two-handers mend and control line effectively because of their longer lengths. Use rods 12 to 14 feet for 8- to 9/10-weight lines. If you are new to two-handers, our expert guides will help hone your skills. Loop and Sage makes excellent two-handers for Rio Grande fishing. Bring a back-up rod or two just in case. We also recommend 9- thru 10-foot single-handed rods in the 8- to 9-weight class. These rods simplify fishing when casting downstream with the prevailing southwest wind at your back. When casting into the wind, 8- or 9-weights also have the muscle to punch large flies through heavy gusts. Given the river's moderate flow and generally even gravel bottom, these rods are capable of battling large sea trout up to 25+ pounds, while ensuring good action with smaller 5- to 12-pound fish.
- **Reels:** Quality reels with strong, smooth drags are essential for playing big sea trout. Reels (and spare spools) should have capacity for the fly line and 100+ yards of 20+ pound backing. Recommended reels include Abel and Sage. Our in-house shop carries a good selection of these and more.





GEAR LIST (continued)

Fishing Gear / Terminal Tackle / Clothing

Equipment suggestions detailed here stem from more than two decades of fly-fishing expertise on the Rio Grande.

- **Lines:** Weight-forward fly lines are the go-to choice for single-handed rods on the Rio Grande. For low-water conditions, use floating lines during early morning and evening hours—when fish are more surface oriented. Also combine floating lines and heads with poly leaders and other intermediate to extra fast-sinking tips. A full selection of poly leaders is key. For single-handed rods, 5 to 10 foot tips are preferred. Use longer 10 to 15 footers for two-handed rods. Full sinking/shooting taper lines also excel here: Teeny T-200 and T-300 lines, for instance. Pack at least one or both of these.

For two-handed rods, we suggest packing a range of heads including such as Skagit, Scandi, and even tweeners. Skagit heads load the rod with less line, easily turn over heavy tips, and are effective for chucking big, heavy flies, or casting into the wind. Scandi, on the other hand, are great for low, warmer-water conditions that call for more delicate presentations. Good running lines are available from Loop, Scientific Anglers, RIO, and Airflo.

Prevailing southwest winds can be used to your advantage by roll-casting or Spey-casting, which eliminates the need to back cast into heavy tailing winds. In many cases simple roll casts can move large streamers 35 to 50 feet across-and-downstream, or far enough to cover good holding lies. Weight-forward lines also roll-cast well by hauling and shooting during the cast.





GEAR LIST (continued)

Fishing Gear / Terminal Tackle / Clothing

Equipment suggestions detailed here stem from more than two decades of fly-fishing expertise on the Rio Grande.

- **Leaders:** Rio Grande sea-run brown trout are not particularly leader shy. More important is the need for diameter and strength to turn over large flies and to play large fish fast, without breaking them off. Pack spools of monofilament and/or fluorocarbon in 10-15 lb breaking strengths. Check leaders, tippet, and their connections regularly for wind knots and abrasions. For floating lines, use knotless tapered leaders from 9 to 12 feet with 0X tippet (13-15-lb). You can also use two-piece leaders built from straight Maxima.
- **Flies:** Pack a range of flies in various sizes to address changing conditions on the river. We recommend using barbless hooks for both the fish and your safety in high wind conditions. Double and treble hooks are not permitted. Sea-run brown trout can be puzzling. Trout that smashed small salmon patterns yesterday may require flies with white rubber legs tomorrow. The only constant as far as color and silhouette seems to be black. Over the years, most Rio Grande fish have been taken on large streamers. However, recently, more large sea trout are taken on smaller wets, nymphs, and even dry flies. Don't leave home without a well-rounded fly box. If you don't own the proper selection of flies for our beats, don't worry, we have got you covered. We keep a huge selection of the best flies in the world on hand at the lodge





GEAR LIST (continued)

Fishing Gear / Terminal Tackle / Clothing

Equipment suggestions detailed here stem from more than two decades of fly-fishing expertise on the Rio Grande.

- **Clothing:** The summer climate of this southern region of South America plays host to a wide range of temperatures and weather conditions. We recommend **layering**, so you can add or remove garments during the day. Pack fleece jackets, thermal underwear, polar neck warmers, wool socks, and a wool cap for cold weather. Flannels and Polartec shirts are ideal for the river, but you'll inevitably change to something lighter back at the lodge. Also take a reliable windstopper/rain jacket.

Exceptional outerwear is a key ingredient to comfortable fishing. And for everything from layering essentials, waders, boots, and stormproof jackets to fishing-ready accessories, and more—Patagonia produces some of the best.

Lodge attire is casual. Neat, but casual is also the norm in Buenos Aires. Laundry service is available at your convenience.

- **Waders:** The Rio Grande is a wade-friendly river. We recommend chest waders for warmth and when fishing deep. Layer with fleece pants and other synthetics under Gore-Tex waders to stay warm. Water temperatures can be in the 40s (F). Thick wool or capilene fleece socks are a must, and wool or fleece long johns are recommended. Good wading boots are essential and felt soles (or rubber boots with studs) help keep you on your feet. Wear a wading belt and consider a wading staff to help maintain balance and footing when the wind rips.





ESTANCIA RIO PELKE JAN 10 > , 2025

Following your trip with Villa Maria Lodge, guests have the opportunity to add Estancia Rio Pelke with Tres Amigos Outfitters located only an hour and a half drive from the cities of El Calafate and Rio Gallegos, both of which are accessible via a short flight from Rio Grande.

This add-on can be tailored to suit your schedule however we typically recommend 3 – 5 days which will allow you to fish all 5 rivers and spring creeks accessible through Rio Pelke, including one night “under the stars” glamping along the river for trophy brook trout.

This boutique, family-style fly fishing program takes anglers on a truly authentic journey combining the best brook and brown trout fishing in southern Patagonia. Guests stay at a traditional family-run Argentine estancia dating back to the 1930's as well as a unique wilderness eco-camp. Limited to four rods per week, this intimate program gives anglers the opportunity to fish four completely private and well-rested spring creeks which hold all sizes of brook trout including some in the four- to six-pound class. This quaint, homestay style venue and eco-camp experience is a treasure within the vast open Patagonian landscape. Estancia Río Pelke offers rewarding homespun cultural experiences coupled with some of the finest spring creek fishing south of the equator.

GETTING THERE

Following your week at Rio Grande, guests fly into El Calafate where we'll be picked up by the team at Tres Amigos Outfitters and transferred to the Lodge at Estancia Rio Pelke. The transfer is approximately 1.5 hours by road across a visually beautiful landscape.





RIO PELKE DAILY ITINERARY

During your stay, guests will fish different private spring creeks and move through three Argentine estancias, covering trophy Brook Trout and spring creek brown trout fisheries.

Guests typically depart the estancia after breakfast which is served at 8AM and drive between one and two hours to the next estancia, get settled, have a short fishing session on a nearby river.

Lunch is served on the river so can be taken at any time. Guests then fish again in the afternoon and have dinner after returning to the estancia at around 9:30 PM.

On non-changeover days, guests fish after breakfast, take a midday break for lunch and siesta, and then return to the water and fish through the afternoon and early evening. Like most Argentinians, dinners are typically enjoyed late, at around 9:30pm.





ESTANCIA RIO PELKE

Estancia Río Pelke is an intimate, inclusive, and family-driven program where guests are received as members of the extended family. The overall vibe is casual and inviting. Despite some modern upgrades, the estancia has remained true to its authentic Patagonian character and guests should expect to go with the flow and quite possibly make some small concessions in the same way you would when visiting a distant family relative.

Tres Amigos Outfitters along with Biott family own and operate Estancia Río Pelke program and are always on-site and available to guests. Juan Manuel serves as the primary host and manager but each family member chips in wherever needed to assure each guest is well cared for.

The accommodations are basic, clean, comfortable, and consistent with 3-star rated hotels. The estancias date back to the late 1800's and has since been renovated with modern amenities such as indoor bathrooms, running water, and electricity.

Additionally, guests stay at the Estancia Pali Aike Eco-Camp, which consists of geodesic dome tents complete with bathroom, heating systems, a shower, and power for charging electronic devices. The Eco-Camp stay is on the last night of the week program, which allows guests to experience a more wilderness setting for the closure of their Patagonian experience.

At Rio Pelke there is good internet connection 24hs. There is no cell service available.





ESTANCIA PALI AIKE ECO-CAMP

Each week guests have the opportunity to spend one night at the private the exclusive Estancia Pali Aike Eco-Camp. This “night under the stars” provides exclusive access to the best brook trout spring creek fishing in the region just moments from the camp site.





FLIES

Having the right flies for the trip is important and we suggest you discuss options with us directly. Below is a basic suggestion. Estancia Pelke does not provide flies for the trip, however does carry a selection of favourites that are available for sale at the Estancia.

Surface patterns such as foam terrestrials/attractors and naturals such as elk hair caddis, Goddard caddis, humpies, Chernobyl ants, beetle, and hopper patterns in size 8 to 12.

Small mouse patterns like the morrish mouse are fun to have on hand. Subsurface flies like scuds, caddis pupa, hares' ear, copper john's, black stone flies, and woolly worms in size 8 to 14.

Add some streamers such as size 8 to 10 weighted and unweighted woolly buggers and zonkers in black and olive to round things out.

Your typical trout box will be effective here, so don't feel the need to purchase a full box of flies once at the lodge.





GEAR LIST

Fishing Gear / Terminal Tackle

This lodge does not provide equipment. But in case is needed can be rented at the lodge as well as buy flies.

Any medium-fast action rod in the 4 to 5 weight class will do (i.e. your typical trout setup). We enjoyed fishing with a 9 foot 4 weight and 9 foot 5 weight across all 5 trout streams.

If you only took one rod, take a 4-weight. We did not take multiple rods, however you may find yourself fishing more efficiently taking one setup rigged with top water / dry fly gear and one rigged with a streamer.

Regarding lines, a traditional weight-forward floating line will serve you well at most locations, however you will benefit from taking sinking leaders (e.g. scientific anglers sonar leaders) across various sink-rates to access the best fishing in some of the deeper pools. We took a sink 3 and sink 5 tip which worked well across the majority of locations.





CLOTHING & OTHER ITEMS TO BRING

You will not require any additional (or different) layering for Rio Pelke. Further to our commentary regarding clothing we suggest bringing the following:

- Waterproof Shell Jacket – Goretex, Patagonia H2NO or similar
- Fleece jackets
- Thermal underwear – top and bottom
- Polar neck warmers or buff
- Wool socks
- Wool cap / beanie
- Flannels and polartec shirts
- synthetic puffer jacket (Patagonia or similar)
- Waders and wading boots – studs not necessary
- Fingerless fishing/sun gloves
- Hat, polarised sunglasses
- shirts, casual clothing
- Casual footwear
- Water bottle, toiletries & sunscreen /skin protection.
- Travel size bug repellent and sunscreen to take out fishing.
- Lip balm – the wind can be harsh on the skin
- Camera, head torch & spare batteries
- Passport

PLEASE ALSO CHECK VISA REQUIREMENTS FOR TRAVELLING THROUGH CHILE





BOOKING CONDITIONS

Please refer to the terms and conditions located on both, Villa Maria Lodge and Tres Amigos Outfitters websites which includes further information surrounding rates, inclusions and exclusions.

Further information regarding Villa Maria is located [here](#).

Tres Amigos Outfitters information is located [here](#).

- Reservations are confirmed with a 50% deposit. All deposits and payments are **100% non-refundable under any circumstances**. Final payment is due 120 days prior to arrival. At this point participants are responsible for total land costs and no refunds will be made for unused land transportation, accommodations or meals.
- Prices do not include airfares. For Rio Grande, prices do not include Fishing Licence (approx. USD \$550 per angler); gratuities for guides and house staff, flies, in-house laundry service, day room at the Rio Grande Hotel on arrival date, as well as any strictly personal costs or modifications.





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