



Pre trip information |

KAU TAPEN LODGE [Rio Grande, Tierra del Fuego, Argentina]

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Please take a moment to read the following information well in advance of your departure. It will help answer most questions concerning your stay.

NOTE TO GROUP LEADERS: Please be sure to share this information with your group. It is vital that everyone in your group is fully prepared, understands the trip cancellation policy on refunds, and have the opportunity to purchase travel protection insurance (especially anyone with a health issue). We cannot assume any financial responsibility for consequences incurred if this information is not provided by you to all members of your group.

. Location

The lodge is located on the banks of the Rio Grande, in Tierra del Fuego, Argentina. The success of the fishery on the Rio Grande is a modern-day fisherman's Cinderella story. In just a decade, through access control and catch-and-release implementation, average catch rates have risen remarkably from less than a fish a day in the early '80s to multiple fish per day, per person, today. In the modern era, starting with the opening of Kau Tapen Lodge in the early '80s, the Rio Grande has become the most productive sea run brown trout fishery in the world. However, trout numbers fluctuate with ocean variables, tides, water levels, and a host of other natural factors.

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, and wild herds of llama-like Guanacos, as well as plentiful red fox populations and condors.

. Getting There

Guests fly into Buenos Aires, Argentina, and typically overnight there, with a day to spend touring this wonderful city. Arrival day at Kau Tapen is set for Saturday, so the following morning guests depart Buenos Aires for the flight south. Commercial airlines fly from Buenos Aires to the airport of Rio Grande (3 hour flight), where you'll be met by a lodge representative. The transfer from Rio Grande airport to the lodge takes 50-60 minutes. On arrival at the lodge, guests are welcomed with cocktails by the entire Kau Tapen staff.

. Travel Documents

You will need a valid passport to travel to Argentina. No visa is required for US or UK passengers, but other nationalities should check with their local consulate.

. Entry Request Fee

American, Canadian and Australian passport holders visiting Argentina will be required to pay a reciprocity fee with the following respective values:

- US \$160 for Americans, good for 10 years
- US \$75 for Canadians as a single entry fee having to be paid each time
- US \$100 for Australians, good for one year

The Argentine Government implemented this "reciprocity fee" to reflect the amounts Argentine citizens must pay when requesting a Visa to travel to your respective country. To access the online payment forum, please click the following link:

<https://virtual.provinciapagos.com.ar/ArgentineTaxes>

You must register and pay with a credit card. Once the payment is received, an electronic receipt will be given and passengers must produce it upon their arrival in Argentina. Print it out, put it in your passport, and bring it to present to immigration when you arrive to Argentina. Please note that this is a requirement for the aforementioned nationalities to enter Argentina and has no relation with Nervous Waters.

*Rates subject to modifications based upon reciprocity

. Air & Travel Arrangements

We work closely with a partner travel agency well versed in travel opportunities throughout the country and would be delighted to provide you with a Concierge Service during your stay. Feel free to contact us once you have booked your international flights so that we can arrange your domestic flights, secure your hotels, and help plan additional activities upon your arrival.

. Health Concerns

No inoculations are required to enter Argentina. Rio Grande has a modern private clinic and Buenos Aires offers first class hospital care in case of an emergency.

Sun and wind are very strong in Tierra del Fuego. Sun block is HIGHLY recommended. There are no problems with the drinking water here. The lodge serves drinkable well water, but bottled water is always available. Mosquitoes and other biting insects are not a problem on the Rio Grande.

If you have a health condition, please make sure to bring ALL the medication you will require for your stay. Please notify the lodge of any health conditions or concerns we should be aware of. You can do this using the pre-trip questionnaire provided. We have a basic first aid supply, but please bring any items you think you may need. As with all destination travel, you should be covered by a general Health and Travel Insurance policy before you fly.

. Medical Insurance and Evacuation

As outlined above, we strongly recommend you purchase both health and trip cancellation insurance. Once we have received the trip payment we are unable to make a refund in the instance of a cancellation.

On the other hand, Nervous Waters values your safety. Although we do everything possible to ensure our guests have a safe experience, unavoidable accidents do happen. An illness or injury in the remote areas we frequent could require a medical evacuation costing over \$100,000 that is not covered by medical or trip insurance.

For this reason, we strongly recommend that you purchase a Global Rescue membership. Global Rescue is a worldwide crisis response company that provides advisory services from in-house medical experts, field rescue from the point of illness or injury, and evacuation to your home hospital of choice.

For standard travel insurance, we can recommend Travel Guard

[Click Here to get an online quote now](#) or call +1-800-826-4919

For emergency medical evacuation, we can recommend Global Rescue

www.globalrescue.com/NervousWaters: +1-800-381-9754 or +1-617-459-4200.

. Climate

The sea run brown trout season runs from December to mid-April. December and January are the warmest

months, and traditionally the windiest. The sun can be strong during the day, but the wind chill factor makes the use of protective gear necessary all season long.

You may also wish to visit www.myweather2.com to check our forecast at Rio Grande, Tierra del Fuego, Argentina.

• The Sea Run Brown Trout

The first brown trout were stocked in Tierra del Fuego by John Goodall in 1935. Shipped from Puerto Montt, Chile, 60,000 '*salmo trutta*' eggs survived the arduous journey to be planted on the Candelaria and McLennan rivers, both tributaries of the Rio Grande. These fish eventually found their way to sea, likely attracted by the rich nourishment of the estuary.

These sea run browns now complete the yearly migratory cycle of salmonids, spawning during the fall in freshwater. They remain in the river up to four years until their first migration to the sea, where they will feed and grow for about 6 months before their first return to freshwater, weighing approximately 3 to 6 pounds. Researchers have found trout that have spawned more than 6 times. A trout that has completed 4 cycles of returning to freshwater can weigh over 20 pounds. The frequency with which they return to freshwater is also an indicator that the fish face very few threats. It's also a very real example of the benefits of catch and release.

Fly-Fishing Equipment

The suggestions that follow are drawn from over two decades' experience fishing the Rio Grande under a wide variety of conditions.

Rods: The Rio Grande features a natural design and in-stream architecture perfectly suited for Spey rods. Mending and controlling line is also easier with a 2-hander. Use 7- to 9-weights from 12 to 15 feet long. If you're new to Spey casting, our guides are expert instructors and will help you learn quickly. Lighter switch rods are increasingly popular and allow anglers to cast a comfortable line with less effort, particularly on windy days.

Single-handers in 7- to 9-weights—and up to 10 feet long—can also be effective in light-wind conditions on the Grande or for technical, close-range nymphing on the Rio Menendez tributary. Longer rods make casting easier with the normal downstream southwest wind, while an 8- or 9-weight helps you to drive your line into or across the wind when necessary. Given the Rio Grande's moderate flow and generally even gravel bottom, you'll find an 8 or 9 capable of doing battle with even the river's largest sea trout (15 to 25+ pounds), while it ensures the most action with smaller sea trout (4 to 10 pounds).

Sage produces many of the best rods we use regularly on the water. In addition to a stalwart lifetime warranty, the company engineers several high-performance options perfectly suited for this fishery.

Reels: choose a quality reel with a powerful, adjustable drag. Reels (and spare spools) should have enough capacity for your fly line and 100+ yards of 20-pound backing. We recommend [Sage](#) and [Abel](#) and carry several options perfectly suited for the Rio Grande at the lodge.

Lines: To be well prepared for Tierra del Fuego, anglers should include at least three lines to accommodate varying water levels and wind conditions. Weight-forward fly lines are generally used on the Rio Grande.

Floating lines are most useful during low-water conditions and in the early morning and evening hours, when sea run brown trout feed near the surface. Integrated sinking-tip lines also work great, while intermediate lines are also effective in some conditions.

For Spey rods, we're mostly using shooting heads, from floating to fast-sinking (S4). Most shooting head can also be used with sink-tips so you can target different depths. RIO AFS are easy to cast and effective, whether fished floating or sinking. RIO offers sinking polyleaders for those lines. If you're fishing a Skagit-style set-up, also check out RIO's MOW Tip system in varying weights and sink rates. Fish Skagit heads for easy rod loading, for casting

larger flies on heavy tips, and for effectively casting into the wind. Use 400- and 700-grain heads, depending on your rod.

Even experienced anglers often find their running line snarls when buffeted by wind. Prevailing southwest winds can be "harnessed" by roll casting or spey-casting, which eliminates the need to backcast—difficult to do with a trailing wind. We found that a simple roll cast carries even large streamers 35 to 50 feet across and downstream, or far enough to cover the holding lies. Weight-forward lines can be rolled effectively by stripping and shooting line during the cast.

Leaders: Experience on the Rio Grande indicates that sea run brown trout are not particularly leader shy. While reasonable stealth should be exercised, your chief concern is to bring monofilament in sizes that will turn over the array of fly sizes and patterns you'll be using. Spools of monofilament should include 10- to 15-pound test weights.

While fishing sinking lines, a few feet of straight (not tapered) monofilament will do fine. Maxima Ultra-green is a good choice as it has plenty of stretch, a factor worth considering when the sea run of a lifetime hits your fly! While fishing, be sure to check your mono regularly for casting knots and abrasions. After each fish caught test your leader knots. For floating lines it's good to have knotless tapered leaders from 9 to 12 feet, with OX tippet.

Flies: Plan to bring a good selection of flies, however, some fly patterns, as well as a modest supply of back-up tackle, will be available for purchase at the lodge. Sea run brown trout are mysterious fish. The only constant in their tastes seems to be a penchant for black. The trout that accepts your small Salmon patterns today may demand flies with white rubber legs tomorrow! Historically, most Rio Grande fish were taken on large streamers, perhaps because those were the patterns most commonly used. In low water conditions, more large sea trout are taken on smaller wet flies, nymphs, and dries. We suggest packing a range of flies in various patterns and sizes, and urge frequent changes when one combination isn't working. These combinations will be determined based on light conditions, water levels, and especially on your guide's advice. Barbless hooks are strongly encouraged. Double and treble hooks are not permitted. Catch-and-release is mandatory.

General fly list:

Collie Dog tube flies (31/2 -41/2" long, both aluminum and copper bodies, with hard plastic tubing and #4 wide-gape hooks)

Sunray shadow in different sizes.

Bunny leech, Zonker, Woolly Bugger (black/olive), articulated string leech types, with electric blue flash, on #2-4 hooks

Peacock (now a staple on Rio Grande, tied on #2-4 hooks)

Girdle or Yuk Bug rubber legs (#4-12)

Bitch Creek nymphs (orange and black for preference, #4-12)

Bead head nymphs (Prince, Hare's Ear, etc. #10-14)

Traditional Atlantic Salmon flies

Bombers or other waking dry flies (natural deer hair, black&green on #4-8 hooks), for use drifted or with a Portland hitch

Include 1- to 2-inch tube flies if you have them, as tubes can be effective on the Rio Grande.

Also, take any large dark trout or salmon fly in which you have confidence. Fishing a fly that has worked for you in the past, and in which you have confidence in is half the battle. Note that larger streamers should be weighted and should be tied on heavy hooks with good gapes.

Waders: Wading isn't difficult on the Rio Grande. However, we recommend chest waders for warmth, to get to that occasionally fished cut bank, and to manage deeper water when crossing the river.

Capilene fleece pants are a must wear under Gore-Tex waders, given that water temperatures can be in the 40s (F.). Thick wool or capilene fleece socks are also a must, and long johns might also be necessary.

Bring a good pair of wading boots with felt or rubber soles (with cleats). Use gravel guards and be sure to bring a wading belt. A wading staff is optional, but can come in handy during very windy days.

Rental Fly-Fishing Equipment

There are quality fly rods available at the lodge for you to use if needed. The cost per day is \$25 and it includes the rod, reel and line. Please advise us of your need for a rod prior to arrival to ensure availability. A charge of \$150 will be billed to you in the event a rental rod is broken. This covers the cost of shipping and repair.

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.

Fishing Methods

Although most of their lives are spent in the ocean, the sea run brown 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 that they're ready to take. The Rio Grande isn't a big river. Thus, it's compatible with a wide range of techniques; critical since a large sea 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 it generally drops as the season progresses.

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 your fish to the net.

Generally, the Rio 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 early morning, evening, and nighttime hours.

Generally, "tails in the morning and heads at night" is a good rule. Also look for fish distributed throughout pools on calm, overcast days. Therefore, try to begin each drift or swing as close to a cut bank as possible, whether the presentation is upstream and across, straight across, or downstream and across. On sunny days, one theory holds that sea trout will take best if they don't have the sun in their eyes, although this theory, like others, is often affected by the number of fish in a particular pool and the number of "takers."

The Daily Program

Guests will leave the lodge around 9 o'clock after breakfast, fishing till around 1 o'clock. Following lunch and a siesta (the duration depend on the season), guests return to the river in the late afternoon and fish until dark. Fishing hours will change slightly depending on the time of year.

Guides

Kau Tapen has a team of experienced, professional international and local guides. They all speak English, and are experts on casting instruction, presentation and techniques, and fly choice. They are there to make your fishing more productive and enjoyable. Don't hesitate to ask them advice.

Vehicles

Guides will transport you to the river in comfortable 4WD vehicles. All are equipped with rod racks, first aid equipment, and VHF radios.

Additional Tips

1. If you have questions, ask your guide. They know the river well and can usually give you the best recommendation on how to approach a particular fishing situation.
2. Fishing days are long, especially early in the season, and the climate can be difficult. Concentrate your fishing during periods when trout are taking, and don't hesitate to rest at midday. If you find that you tire as the week progresses, talk with your guide about departing for the river a bit later; they will be happy to accommodate you.
3. As a rule, the more time your fly spends in the water, the more sea trout you'll catch. You'll want to minimize false casting in order to cover as much water as possible during each outing. One common retrieve is the use of short strips, but since pools and flies vary it's best to consult your guide on how best to fish each new situation and which retrieves work best. Point your rod tip to where your fly line enters the water, following the line around as it swings through the run. Depending on the swiftness of the current, you may want to mend your line upstream, occasionally even downstream, in order to present your fly most advantageously to the trout.
4. Check leaders regularly for wind knots, which can halve the breaking strength of monofilament.
5. If you have a fish roll at the fly, follow ,or "bump" it in any way; there is a good chance that the trout will come back to the same or a different fly. Rest the fish and cast again to the same location. Try to repeat the same length cast and fly speed. Then, change the speed and fly on the next several casts. If the trout does not show himself again after a few changes, mark his location and return to try him again after resting that portion of the pool.
6. In setting a hook, it's best simply to tighten and let the fish hook itself. **Never jerk the line to set a hook.**
7. Having hooked a large fish, don't plant your feet and attempt to drag it upstream against the current. Once you have the trout under control, head for shore and move with your fish, staying either abreast or slightly downstream of it. Also remember to "bow" to jumping sea trout by lowering your rod tip as the fish leaves the water.
8. Play sea run brown trout aggressively; much like you would with Atlantic salmon or steelhead. Many anglers play large fish too gingerly, which causes more losses than bullying the fish.
9. If you hook a fish in low light, communicate with your guide immediately. Listen carefully to his instructions, particularly with regards to the most reliable spot to net your fish.
10. Handle all fish with care and release them unharmed. (All fishing on the Rio Grande is catch and release.) Try not to let your trophies thrash on the bank. For pictures, cradle the fish in wet hands, gripping the handle of the tail firmly. Return the fish to the river as quickly as possible.

Catch & Release

Kau Tapen abides by a strict catch and release policy, which has over the years helped increase the numbers of returning fish.

The mortality rate of released fish is almost non-existent, and these fish do not die after spawning. Catch and release hugely increases the chances of that fish returning to the river.

We ask that all fishermen de-barb all flies. Not only do barbless hooks penetrate more readily, allowing for more successful hookups, but they are also more easily removed, should a cast go errant. Guides are equipped with large nets featuring built-in scales. They are trained to land your fish, weigh it and measure it, and release it unharmed.

If you are landing and releasing your own fish, hold it facing the current, and avoid moving it back and forth in the water. You may have to hold it in this position for a good while. Be patient, only when a fish is thoroughly rested should it be allowed to swim away.

The Lodge

Built in 1983, Argentina's Kau Tapen Lodge offers anglers maximum comfort during their fishing trip, as well as convenient access to the Rio Grande and surrounding pools. The lodge accommodates up to 12 guests in 5 double and 4 single rooms. Rooms are equipped with double-, king-, and queen-sized beds.

A large living room area opens up to views of the Menendez and Rio Grande valleys. A roaring fire and well stocked bar will welcome you after every fishing session!

The lodge has a tackle shop with a great selection of [Sage rods](#), quality reels, flies, lines, and apparel especially selected to suit the needs of your trip. In addition, guests have access to the lodge's fully equipped fly-tying table. The lodge has 2 wading gear rooms, a sauna, Finnish steam bath, and massage room.

Food and drink

Kau Tapen offers wonderful cuisine, featuring local meats, fresh vegetables, and delicious deserts. A traditional Asado (BBQ) will be held once during your stay. Here you can sample different cuts of meat and wonderful salads. A full cooked breakfast is available, together with fresh fruit, yogurts, home baked breads and jams, and a selection of cereals. Kau Tapens cellars feature a wonderful selection of fine wines served during lunch and dinner.

Electric Current

A standard converter and European adapter for a two-pronged plug should work fine throughout Argentina. The lodge has reliable electric power and back-up battery lighting.

** The lodge is 220 volts, 50 cycles, generator powered.*

Safety Equipment

For eye protection, sunglasses should be worn while fishing the Rio Grande. Polarized lenses and a fishing hat with a brim that will protect your eyes and ears make an ideal combination. Also, anglers should pack yellow or clear protective glasses. Yellow lenses tend to brighten the dusk sky. Anglers who wear prescription glasses should pack prescription polarized lenses as well as backups.

Guides are prepared to handle emergency medical situations, but you can take a few Band-Aids for cuts, scrapes, and blisters. Many anglers like to tape their stripping finger with electrical tape to avoid cuts.

Medication

Travelers should always pack medication for such common ailments as diarrhea, upset stomach, motion sickness, headache and nausea, along with any necessary prescriptions. Most visitors to Argentina don't

experience stomach problems associated, for instance, with Mexico, but it pays to have treatment available just in case. You'll find food to be outstanding and bottled water available everywhere in Argentina.

Licenses

All information necessary to obtain your fishing license will be taken from your pre-trip questionnaire. Please make sure you fill it out and send it in one month prior to your departure.

Miscellaneous

Insects are not a problem in Tierra del Fuego, but be sure to bring and use sun block (45-60 SPF) even on cloudy days. Also plan to use lip balm, depending on your sensitivity. (The sun is very strong!)

Use a tackle bag or backpack for odds and ends on the water. Most of the fishing on the Rio Grande is near the vehicle. Items such as extra jackets, vests, and tackle can be left in the vehicle each day between fishing periods. Small pliers are handy for debarbing hooks and releasing fish. Don't forget [nippers](#), dry fly floatant, line dressing, and a small headlamp or flashlight for evening fishing. A hook sharpener and Polartec or neoprene (fingerless) fishing gloves are also recommended.

Note: Rods and reels ride assembled on top of the vehicle to and from the river, and between beats each day, often in dusty conditions. To protect your valuable reels, bring neoprene or some type of close-fitting reel cover that can be easily removed.

Emergencies

Kau Tapen lodge has telephone and Internet services for guests. You will find all the relevant contact details in your final itinerary, a copy of which you can leave with a family member in case of emergency. Your pre-trip questionnaire should indicate a contact in case of emergency, which is forwarded to the managers of Kau Tapen lodge.

Gratuities

The guides and staff at Kau Tapen Lodge work hard to provide you with the best experience during your trip. Gratuities are discretionary and show your appreciation with the standard of the services provided. They are much appreciated by all. Typically gratuities for guides and staff range from US \$80 -110 per person, per day. The tip pool will be divided by managers amongst ALL the staff at Kau Tapen.

Currency

The dollar is widely accepted, and you can change dollars to pesos at your hotel or any bank. When paying in dollars, most merchants give change in pesos. This can be a good way to get small bills for cabs, tips for porters, etc. It is difficult to exchange traveler's checks of any kind outside Buenos Aires. American Express, Visa, and MasterCard are widely accepted. The lodge accepts payment in cash and with the credit cards previously mentioned. With the latter, there will be a surcharge of 3.5 % added to the final payment.

Emergency contact

CONTACT AT THE LODGE

Carolina Rivilli
carorivilli@hotmail.com
(+54) 11 5258-0253

MAIN OFFICE

Santiago Garcia Seeber
santiago@nervouswaters.com
Phone: (+54) 11 4801-1008
Direct from USA: 917-338-7186



www.nervouswaters.com