

MAHSEER, MOUNTAINS, TROUT AND TEMPLES –

A unique guided fishing experience in Himachal Pradesh, Northern India, April 2012

The tour is based on “Andy Trewin’s Mahseer Diary”, which is the record of a group of friends checking out the fishing opportunities in this little known area of the world. It is suitable for either beginners to this sport or experts, with both spinning and fly being used depending on the conditions and species hunted. Andy Trewin will accompany the group throughout the tour with additional support being given by David Butterworth, who owns and runs Basunti.

Dates: 28th April - 10th May, 2012

Group size: Maximum 6, minimum 4.

Non fishing partners who accompany anglers are not included in this limitation.

The number of people who are fishing on this trip has been deliberately kept low, so that the maximum amount of assistance and advice can be given to anyone who might require it.

Accommodation:

We will always choose the best accommodation available although this will be pretty basic when we go to Barot, as the choice is very limited due to the remoteness of the location. All accommodation is based on twin sharing rooms. Price for single supplement is available but we cannot guarantee availability due to the limited number of rooms in some of the hotels.

Food:

Amritsar and Dharamshala are based on a breakfast only basis while your stay at Basunti and Barot is on full board basis. The food will be mainly village vegetarian with fish dishes. When you are in Dharamshala or Amritsar you might be tempted by the wide variety of Tibetan and Punjabi dishes on offer. Our guide will make sure you are shown the best and safest places to eat should you venture outside the hotel.

Transport:

All transport is included, from the point you are met at Amritsar to your return to Amritsar. We use a fully registered tourist transporter, with up to date and well maintained vehicles and safe driving, English speaking drivers. We have been using this company for over twenty years and would be happy to arrange with them any other travel requirements you might need.

ITINERARY

Day 1: 28th April, 2012

You will be met by our Basunti guide on your arrival to Amritsar in the Punjab and taken to your Hotel. Amritsar is accessible by rail, road and air and any assistance and advice you may require on getting there will be provided. There will be a late afternoon trip with a guide to the closing of the border ceremony. This has to be one of the strangest ceremonies in the world, the official closing of the border between India and Pakistan, where nationalistic fervour (now slightly toned down due to the current political climate) comes to the forefront and both sides try to outdo each other. An experience not to be missed.

Night hotel in Amritsar.

Day 2: 29th April

Early morning guided tour of the Golden Temple. This beautiful temple is set within a large manmade pond in the centre of this historic city. The Golden Temple is the holiest shrine of the Sikh religion and watching the many pilgrims thronging the walkways, while the early morning sun is glinting off the domes of the temple, is a magical experience. Return to hotel for a leisurely breakfast before driving (approx 3.5 hours) to Basunti in the State of Himachal Pradesh. Basunti is owned and operated by David Butterworth (himself a keen fisherman) and his family. It is situated in two acres of lush sub-tropical gardens, surrounded by forests and the huge lake, Maharana Pratap Sagar. With commanding views of the lake and the Himalayas beyond, Basunti is the ideal place to explore this remote region, its people and wildlife, plus great fishing on your doorstep. Andy, our fishing guide, will give an afternoon talk on tactics, equipment and places to be visited. Rest of the afternoon to relax by the pool or explore the gardens around Basunti.

Night at Basunti (B at Amritsar + LD at Basunti).

Day 3: 30th April

After breakfast we will drive (approx 20 minutes) to the government fishing centre to get our licenses. We will then fish the area in front of the centre with the aim of landing a Golden Mahseer or possibly a Singhara. Drive back to Basunti for lunch, as the fish normally stop feeding at around 11.00- 11.30hrs and also the heat 35C+ starts to make staying out a rather uncomfortable option.

Afternoon guided tour of the garden and surrounding area by David Butterworth, who has a wealth of knowledge of the flora and fauna of the local area. Evening fishing session concentrating on the many gullies around Basunti in the hope of landing some large Sol (Spotted Murrel), a fish not to be taken lightly, reaching weights of 20kg plus.

Night at Basunti (BLD).

Day 4: 1st May

Early morning start fishing for Mahseer in the lake with a picnic breakfast provided. With so many bays and inlets surrounding Basunti we will concentrate on those offering the best opportunities, after talking to the local fishermen. We will continue fishing until it gets too hot or the fish stop taking. Afternoon free. Evening fishing session going for Sol or Mahseer, depending on the conditions and what the fish are doing.

Night at Basunti (BLD).

Day 5: 2nd May

After breakfast drive (approx 3 hours) to McLeod Ganj, which is situated above Dharamshala and is the home to His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Afternoon guided tour of this fascinating former British hill station taking in the monastery, Palace and Temple walk. McLeod Ganj is truly unique amongst Hill Stations in India as you have such a variety of people and cultures co-existing in the same place. This is also an ideal place to shop, with a huge variety of goods on offer, just remember that bargaining is very much part of the culture in this part of the world.

Night at hotel McLeod Ganj (B at Basunti).

Day 6: 3rd May

After early breakfast drive (approx 4 hours) to Barot. Driving in India is always special with so much happening and so much to see. A friend once said that it is like an endless movie, surprises and delights at every turn with the occasional fright. The drive to Barot is truly spectacular with some breath-taking mountain scenery and local colour. We will check in to the Guest House then start to fish the reservoir on the outskirts of this small town, going after both Brown and Rainbow trout.

Night at Barot Guest House (B at McLeod Ganj).

Day 7: 4th May

Day spent fishing the river above Barot. We will drive as far as we can then walk, fishing as we go. This is truly going into the unknown, as I doubt we will get anywhere near the end of wild fish taking possibilities.

Night at Barot Guest House (B at Barot).

Day 8: 5th May

Drive (approx 3.5 hours) to Pragpur, India's first heritage village, where we will have lunch at Judges Court. A chance to explore this traditional Indian village. Drive to Basunti (2.5hrs) for a spot of evening fishing, time permitting.

Night at Basunti (B at Barot + D at Basunti).

Day 9: 6th May

Part of the group will accompany Andy on a drive to Uchi Bassi to have a chance to land some monster Mahseer in this unusual place. We will stay at Uchi Bassi until it gets to hot or the fish stop rising. Remaining fisherman at Basunti will fish the lake, with the possibility of going into deeper water on either canoes or the local fisherman's boats, depending on the weather. Afternoon free.

Evening Fishing for Sol and Mahseer.

Night at Basunti (BLD).

Day 10: 7th May

A reversal of day 8 with the people who remained at Basunti going to Uchi Bassi.

Night at Basunti (BLD).

Day 11: 8th May

Early drive (1.5 hours) to the sunken 8th Century Vhatu Temple, with Picnic breakfast. A possibility here to catch Singhara and Mahseer in a truly spectacular setting. Return to Basunti for lunch.

Afternoon free. Evening fishing for Mahseer, Singhara or Ghar for those who like to notch up species caught.

Night at Basunti (BLD).

Day 12: 9th May

Free day to relax by the pool or go fishing if you still have the urge to bag that final fish.

Night at Basunti (BLD).

Day 13: 10th May

After leisurely breakfast, depart Basunti and transfer to Amritsar.

(B)

Meal plan abbreviation key:

B – Breakfast

L – Lunch

D - Dinner

PRICE:

Price per tour per person, sharing in a twin room, including meals, accommodation, transportation and fishing guide as stated above is £1890.

Price for non-fishing partner, sharing in a twin room, is £1290.

Single supplement is £550 (subject to availability).

Included in the price:

- 1 night accommodation in Amritsar (MK Hotel or similar)
- 8 nights' accommodation at Basunti
- 2 nights' accommodation in Barot (Guest House, modest)
- 1 night accommodation in Mcloed Ganj (Chonor House or similar)
- Meals as indicated in the itinerary, excluding lunch at Judges Court
- Transport as indicated in the itinerary, in a shared air-conditioned vehicle
- A local guide in Amritsar and McLoed Ganj
- A fishing guide during 8/9 fishing days

Excluded from the price:

- All international and domestic flights
- Your cost of arrival into Amritsar at the beginning of the tour and your onward journey after being transferred back to Amritsar at the end of the tour.
- Visa costs (most non Indian nationals need a visa to India)
- Your travel and medical insurance (see Basunti Terms and Conditions for Insurance requirements, at the time of registration for the tour).
- Your fishing equipment
- Lunch at Judges Court, all soft drinks and Alcoholic beverages throughout

ANDY'S ROD, REEL AND TACKLE SUGGESTIONS:

Spinning:

Rods: We have yet to find anything to beat the Shimano Beastmaster 9/10ft. This rod will land anything and is easily carried on the plane.

Reels: Any good quality fixed metal spool loaded with 12 to 18 lb line.

Spinners: I have tried most and have found that Silver Mepps in sizes 1, 2 and 3 work best with Silver Tobys coming a close second, in weights of 8 or 10 gm.

Fly Fishing for Mahseer:

Rods: I was using an Airflo Bluetooth XT 9' rated, size #8-9 lines.

Reels: I was using a Sierra D-lite #9-11; this reel, a die cast machine construction, is very strong and will hold a lot of backing, which will be needed with any fish over 1kg.

Fly Lines: I was using #9 weight, floater, intermediate and fast sink. Try getting lines with loops already welded in (Airflo do these) - any joint is a weak spot.

Flies: Any good fry imitation seems to be best as this is their main food. If you are going to tie some yourself, I would use saltwater fly tying hooks size 10 to size 6 as these are very strong and have a good weight.

Fly Fishing for Trout:

Rods: Any 9' travel rod is ok for this as long as it is not too soft - I used a Greys GS2 #6, 4pce - a lovely little rod with a good tip action.

Reels: I used a System-2 reel.

Lines: #6 lines floater and intermediate with detachable medium sink tips for the floater.

Flies: Cul de Canard for dry flies - I find brown or black body works well. Large Weighted Shrimps, (these fish are not shy so don't be scared to go big). Gold Head Pheasant Tail, GH Hare's Ear and any Spider tying. They also do well on traditional wet flies and Diawl Bachs.