



TheBest OFF THE BEATEN



Brig Rig

Brigadoon Lodge and Soque River Outfitters, a fly-fishing shop, are just north of Clarkesville, Georgia, which is 85 miles northeast of Atlanta. Fishing fees are \$250 per person per day, not including a guide. Free-standing cabins or private rooms in one of the two lodges start at \$100 a night. Special rates for corporate retreats are available. Info: 706-754-1558; www.brigadoonlodge.com; email: info@brigadoonlodge.com

Tell me about it. Next morning, it takes me several hours to finally connect with, and then land, a monster brown trout. Anne needs help reeling in a 7-pounder, which, I point out, weighs more than our firstborn child.

Maury. Well Maury gets a bunch of bites, and after a long battle during which I can hear the drag on his real yowling like a cat, he looks dog-tired.

That evening in the great room of the lodge, where a roaring fire casts its warm flares against the lacquer of exposed red-oak beams, two other guests ask us how we fared. "Fair to middling," I say in fisherman's code for "We don't want to talk about it."

Obviously thinking I'm being modest, one of them replies, "We did pretty good, too. You know, I've fished all over the West - Montana, Colorado, Utah, the California mountains - and I don't know of anywhere in the world where you can catch fish like this." He and his buddy got 50 hookups and landed something like 25 trout, "A lot of 5- and 6-pounders," he says. "They really put up a fuss running up and down the river."

Maury changes the subject. - David Bailey

Trout Rout

We arrive at Brigadoon Lodge in the mountains of northeast Georgia too late in the day to fish but in time for a quick stroll. As my wife, Anne, our friend Maury and I walk toward the soothing sound of the Soque River's riffles, we overtake a lad carrying two white joint-compound buckets.

"You're not supposed to see me," he says sheepishly, "but come on anyway."

Breaking through the natural arbor of showy spruce and twisted rhododendrons, we watch as he casts cups of fish pellets onto the surface of a glassy pool that's aglow with the last rays of the setting sun. What we thought were oblong rocks in the streambed turn into fish - big fish, some up to 30 inches long. We watch as speckly rainbows, red-bellied brooks and sleek brown trout engage in a savage, almost frightening feeding frenzy.

"David," Maury whispers to me, "this is the Jurassic Park of fishing resorts."

Over drinks that night, we find out that the last stream survey estimated about 4,200 trout per mile in this strictly private stretch of the river. Average size? About 7 pounds.

"These are stream-bred, not store bought, trout," Rebekah Stewart, our hostess and the lodge's owner, tells us. "And they can see you, so they're hard to catch."