



Yellowstone Fly-Fishing Dreams

Man, mused Larry Pierce when he opened last month's *Flying Adventures*. "I am 63 years old. I need to get out of this business (RV sales) and back into adventure!" Since then the kicks-deprived pilot of a Bellanca has burned the bejeezus out of his personal thrill-o-meter with his fly-in favorite great time: a fun-filled, fly-fishing escape to West Yellowstone, Montana.

From his Brigham, Utah home "it's a perfect flight past the western slope of the Tetons to the perfectly "splendid" airport, he raves of West Yellowstone (WYS). It's also a perfect excuse to get the old adventure juices flowing, for not only is "West," as its pal Larry affectionately calls the town perched at Yellowstone park's west entrance, doorway to the largest known concentration of free-roaming wildlife in the lower 48, but it's also got the mythical Madison River, Montana's very Mecca for fly-fishing.

"There are probably 50 hotels in West...no, more than 50," says Larry, "but we generally call the Three Bear Lodge (800.646.7353 www.threebearlodge.com). Sauna, pool and great prime rib." He adds: "I also recommend the gorgeous, venerable old Stage Coach Inn (www.yellowstoneinn.com) because of the ambiance and dancing. Of course," he admits, "there are also plenty of new, more mod places to stay,

but modernity ruins the experience." Truly a retro soul? You'll get your giddies by pitching a tent in the lodgepole pine grove 100 yards from the airport flightline, says Larry. "But better take a good warm sleeping bag. The elevation is 6,644 feet and a shower is likely almost any afternoon."

With the mighty Madison a mere quarter-mile hike from the runway, what's a little precipitation. The river that flows from southwest Montana to its confluence with the Jefferson and Gallatin rivers at Three Forks offers itself up to fly-fishing fans and fanatics alike. Known to gift fish like one 9-lb brown of local lore (3-5 pounders can be the norm), the Madison is large, deep pools and runs; tremendous beds of aquatic weeds; deeply undercut banks and potholes a'plenty...in short, an angler's very fantasy. October, when browns run with the warming water, is an ideal Larry-approved time to cast your line.

"There are other lakes and streams in almost every direction," says the fly-fishing enthusiast who loves having wife Dorothy and any combination of their combined families' 11 kids along on his exploits. Hebgen Lake, said to be the best dry fly lake fishing in Montana, with large rainbow and browns averaging 16-18 inches. Earthquake or "Quake" Lake, formed by a then-devastating 1959 shaker. And spectac-

ularly scenic Henry's Lake, Targhee National Forest's high mountain home to cutthroat and cutthroat-rainbow hybrids. All in all there is choice and challenging angling in everything from "truly excellent" wet fly and nymph water (says one fly-fishing guide), to river that is marvelous marshy, boggy, beaver-tunneled, willow-clumped fun. There is also the promise of incredible Yellowstone itself.

Yes, from bear to bison to gray wolves, from the Indians' *wapiti* (elk) to autumn's migrating birds like the Trumpeter Swan and White Pelican, Larry's favorite fly-in thrill of late is really, no kidding, beckoning his Bellanca.

Sure is, he crows, "in my estimation, this is THE way to go to Yellowstone."

Copy that, Larry. Catch you in the Madison!

Stats on Montana angling adventure is at www.flyfishingyellowstone.com/madison ✕



Dorothy and Larry Pierce and their Bellanca