

Falling Waters Mountain Lodge
Georgia's only Orvis-endorsed fly fishing lodge
Written by Carl Danbury

Ever wonder why your buddies — those devoted fly fishermen — travel the globe in search of trophy rainbow-, brown- and brook-trout when those marvelous species may be caught less than 90 minutes away in North Georgia?

With more than 4,000 miles of rivers and streams a few casts away from the Northside, fly fishing for trout is an experience that even novices can enjoy all year long in some North Georgia waters.

The extended Presidents' Day weekend provided me with such an opportunity and despite the cold temperatures, the action on the water was hot just south of Blue Ridge.

Making my third-ever fly fishing excursion, and first in more than six years, Kent Klewein, Falling Waters head fly fishing guide, whisked me away from the comforts of Falling Waters Mountain Lodge on a 25-minute drive to a private stream, where more than two miles of trophy trout waters awaited. This pristine trout habitat supports a healthy population of both wild rainbow and brown trout and the native trout found here have brilliant hues.

Within just a few minutes of wading into the cold waters, I landed my first of several rainbows, thanks to Klewein's refresher course, choosing the perfect fly and knowledge of where the trout awaited. I quickly found out that presentation of a meal is just as vital in trout fishing as it is at an upscale restaurant. Casting my fly upstream and allowing the creek's swift current to take the bait to where the trout were waiting for their meal, the strike indicator is yanked beneath the water's surface and Kent excitedly exhorts, "set the hook!" In the cold waters, trout aren't the fierce fighters they are in the spring, but a fly fisherman still has to be gentle when reeling his catch toward the awaiting net. The hooks are tiny and trout possess a small, fragile mouth. You can't bully a trout toward the net, you have to coax and steer them rather than yank.

Hiring an experienced Orvis guide like those offered by Falling Waters is very important to those who have never tried fly fishing before, and for those experienced anglers who aren't familiar with the local waters.

"Some people feel intimidated by fly fishing, because they don't think they are going to be good enough to do it," Klewein said. "It's kind of like golf in one sense. They are both technical, difficult to master and you need to practice, but the difference is every time you go out fly fishing your results are better. You can see yourself improving, whereas in golf, that's not necessarily the case.

"If you hire a guide to demonstrate the proper techniques you are much better off, because you can't learn them from a book," Klewein continued. "You have to experience them and observe them. The benefit you get when you hire a guide is not only the

equipment but the countless hours he has invested to put you out in the right place, at the right time, rigged up with the right gear. If you try it on your own, a lot of times you could be shooting in the dark. My goal is to make my clients more confident on the water when they are on their own. I want them to have a great time, catch fish and then be more proficient so they feel more comfortable in the future. They'll learn the sport 10 times faster if they don't try to figure it out on their own."

Klewein said that a two-day itinerary is his most requested offering by his clients.

"One day, we will float down the Toccoa River on my drift boat, cover a lot of water, see a ton of great scenery and be able to work with my clients on a number of tactics, which are different than those you experience with wading. The next day, we'll wade fish on the private waters for the trophy trout, which is a little bit more technical but very rewarding because you are dealing with such a unique genetic pool and wild nature of the trout, some of which have been in those waters for decades. We can offer more than that with the combination of lake fishing for warm water species (bass), river and stream fishing for cold-water species (trout). A three-day trip would cover all the bases of what we can offer a fisherman," Klewein added.

"A lot of people don't know this, but Lake Blue Ridge has a spectacular population of smallmouth bass up to five pounds, which is very rare because most people think of it as a Northern species," he said. "Not only that, but it has walleye, which is another big species that people think you can only catch up north. Lake Blue Ridge is the southernmost lake that has both, and that's really cool. And, we guide for largemouth and spotted bass."

Through Falling Waters, the only Orvis-endorsed fly fishing lodge in Georgia, guests can experience first-class accommodations and also can enjoy recreational pursuits nearby, including hiking, mountain biking, canoeing and horseback riding. Jennifer Patton, director of guest relations for Falling Waters Mountain Lodge, coordinates all of these pursuits for her guests.

The lodge is part of Falling Waters, a 1,771-acre real estate community by A.S. Dover, which is in its early development stages. Two phases of homesites already are in the community plans, and Falling Waters offers some of the most stunning long range mountain views in North Georgia, picturesque waterfalls and dense hardwood forests.

The lodge offers a great way to see this new property and to experience all the recreational pursuits North Georgia has to offer, including an unparalleled fly fishing opportunity any time of year.

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