



Travel Guide To **North America**

From The Editors Of
Fly Fish America

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British Columbia — Elysia Resort

IF YOU WANT to catch rainbows—big rainbows—there's no better place in North America than the Quesnel Lake watershed in British Columbia's Cariboo-Chilcotin Mountains. Quesnel Lake is the deepest fjord lake in the world, reaching depths of over 2,000 feet. Its countless feeder streams and two major tributaries are the spawning grounds for millions of sockeye salmon, and its unique strain of rainbow trout grow to mammoth proportions.

Quesnel Lake rainbows are a 100% naturally-reproducing population, and are as wild as fish get. They have brilliant pink cheeks and flanks, iridescent silver-green sides, and they're bigger, stronger, and fight harder than any rainbows we've encountered this side of Alaska. Fish over 20-pounds are caught here every year, and my personal-best rainbow (12 lbs.) was the highlight of my last trip to Quesnel.

We've had the chance to fish this region several times, and my favorite time of year to come is September. The sockeyes are completing their 300+ mile migration up the Fraser River from Vancouver, congregating in the lake, and entering their spawning streams. It's here that the resident rainbows, Dolly Varden trout, and kokanee salmon gorge on the plentiful sockeye eggs. Plus, September brings Quesnel's hefty lake trout onto the shoals near the creek mouths, and into range of fly anglers during the evening hours.

No matter what time of year you venture here, the best place to stay is Elysia Resort, Quesnel's only full-service

resort. It's nestled along the southern shore of the lake, just across from where I landed that 12-pounder. They offer affordable accommodations ranging from cozy guestrooms, to deluxe cabins with kitchens, fireplaces and decks—all with breathtaking views of the lake. The panoramic dining room has an equally impressive view, and Elysia's talented chef will make you forget that you're deep in the wilderness.

The resort offers anglers many options, both guided and unguided, on Quesnel Lake and the many rivers and stillwaters in the area. While the main lake is home to the really big bruisers, the hundreds of small ponds that dot the landscape hold a number of strains of wild rainbows. We spent a very memorable day float tubing one of these unnamed waters on our first trip, casting to 5-plus-pound rainbows porpoising on the surface during a waterboatman hatch (left, and page 8).

Elysia's chief guide, Quille Farnham, knows these waters better than anyone. In fact, she guided me to my big catch, and inducted me into the Elysia Resort 10-Pound Club, for which I still proudly wear my club hat.

The resort can also arrange fly-out trips to areas only accessible by float plane, as well as jet boat trips, float trips, and sightseeing adventures. For more information, log on to www.elysiaresort.com or www.fishrainbowwaters.com, or contact owner Susan Barton at (250) 243-2433 or via e-mail at rainbow@elysiaresort.com **by Crispin Battles**

