

rathie-rance-2018-01-21done.mp4

[00:00:10] This is the PRG lodge at trebling. This is the signature lodge of Patagonia river guides. We're a guide service. We also run all-inclusive lodge services anywhere from two to three days to a week. We fish a different river every day throughout three regions and in Patagonia. And it's a complete guide and outfitting service.

[00:00:40] Well I graduated from Montana Tech I guess 20 years ago and came down here to get out of winter primarily.

[00:00:49] Is that Billings or Butte?

[00:00:49] And Butte.

[00:00:50] Okay.

[00:00:51] Yeah. So the, the idea was to get out of winter. I was a, graduated with an engineering degree and backpack sort of came down and got a job as a fly fishing guide and never really looked back. I've got some family history in the business. My mom owned a fly shop in Melrose, which is on the Big Hole River. My dad was a guide outfitter on the Big Hole as well and so was my grandfather. He was one of the first guides and outfitters in the state of Montana. So that's sort of the background.

[00:01:21] We originally just started this business as there was a lack of real what I what I figured were qualified outfitters here in the southern part of Patagonia and we were in a sweet spot. I guess 17 years ago we started the business where there were.

[00:01:38] Fewer competitors and there was a need for a very well done service in a faraway place. And so we started small. It was a guide service originally which is why the company's called Patagonia River Guides and not some kind of lodge not named after one of us either.

[00:01:57] And guides the guides in that sort of the are the strength of our company we've got a great culture through three regions here with this many. Got forty two guides working for us right now and basically we built the company by guides for guides and so we have a little different philosophy on how we run our business. Which. We give more credit and everything guides need to sort of succeed and then they carry this through and provide what we consider to be the top fly fishing trips in Argentina.

[00:02:38] Well growing up in Montana. It's pretty natural outdoor stuff.

[00:02:42] Hunting and fishing.

[00:02:44] Like I said my dad was an outfitter, my grandfather was an outfitter. Mom owned a fly shop, uncle was an outfitter and so it's always I've always been exposed to it.

[00:02:53] I started fly fishing a lot younger than most people do. I can remember having having a warmer spinner but around the age of seven I was already fly fishing. Could row a boat by the time I was twelve and that just sort of really stuck and it's really a beautiful sport and it was one that I really fell in love with.

[00:03:19] Well it depends on the continent. Depends on the place. I fished really a lot of places in the world. Guided a lot of places in the world and for different kinds of species and as well as different geographical regions. I'm certainly a mountain man. So if I if I ever had to choose where to be and how to fish, it'd be the mountains for trout. But you know. When I first got here to Argentina Patagonia I found some stuff and it's very very rarely fished.

[00:03:52] And there's some incredible places here. My favorite of all time is a river called the Riviadio which is in the Los Alerces National Park. It's got a little bit of everything. Site fishing big fish varied fishing. And it's in an environment where I've never really fished before which is a sort of tropical, not tropical, subtropical rainforest. Temperate rainforest. So these are incredible and special places. I could name a bunch more if I wanted to saltwater fishing and international places that I've been to. But around here that's sort of the one I like the most.

[00:04:32] Well obviously without them we would be nowhere. Argentina actually has a lot of private land a lot more than the United States.

[00:04:41] One of the great things about the United States is all the public land and access to public water so we have national parks take it to another degree of protection. So national parks obviously take that to a another level of protection. And I think that's really important that we preserve try to preserve things exactly how they were. And the case in the national parks is you know sort of back in our founding fathers day here. These parks have only been in place I guess for one hundred, one hundred and twenty years. But there's a lot of native species and a lot of things that need to be protected. Our particular national forest here protects the South American Sequoia which there are only six stands of these trees left in the world. And the species themselves like like fish you know we're, we're talking about a national park here now protecting trout which were not indigenous to Argentina but the the native species they didn't really have a native species which was a food fish other than a perca which is kind of like a small mouth bass. And so the National Park does a good job now of taking care of trout, which is great.

[00:05:59] So the trout were originally introduced by English settlers and there's a lot of this happening in South America.

[00:06:06] They took trout around the world. It was first it was a fish food and then it became a sport around our area here. The locals love the fish. If you go out there right now you see people fishing everywhere. They loved the fish. They eat them, so it's a food source and then it's a significant source of income and revenue for tourism and the local economy.

[00:06:34] I would say it's it's it's more sport fishing than that than food because they're they're actually, we have everything we need to survive here. So we're the sort of bread basket and food producer in the world. That's just you know a big deal not quite as big as the US but it's one of the top grain and beef and food producers in the world.

[00:06:56] OK so it's primarily just for the pleasure of fishing?

[00:06:59] Yeah but you know we still I mean people are still in Argentina and we're still catch and release is still catching on and so we still have this sort of this imbalance in that some people will kill 400 500 600 fish they'll dynamite pitchforks and everything else and then we have people on the other extreme that are fly fishing and try to conserve the

resource. And somewhere in the middle you get guys that will take two or three here. But understand that if you kill them all they won't be there anymore. So it's it's actually quite quite a wide mix. You have guys here that fish with a tin can and a worm. You have guys that spin fish, you have guys that troll fish and you have guys that fly fish. More and more every year I see people fly fishing. You can go over here to the river right beside us here right now and you'll see at least a half a dozen guys out there trying to figure out how to how to flip a fly in the air with a fly rod and it's really pretty pretty awesome to see that it's catching on. We actually got 75 percent Rainbows 25 percent Browns on average. We've got a small population of Brook trout in credit including one of the most incredible populations of brook trout in the world and also some Atlantic land, landlocked salmon. Depending on the watershed that you're in. So on any given day you're going to catch a lot more rainbows than browns. Not many brook trout until later in the season. They'll, they'll come into the rivers and landlocked salmon the population is sort of on the decline and those used to be monstrous landmark salmon. And you know 30 35 ish fish now or we're getting probably 20 a season, 25 a season of trout are much more much easier to catch and giant brook trout.

[00:09:02] Is that what's special about them? You mentioned that they were incredible.

[00:09:05] They're really. Yeah I mean it's truly that, it's truly the size and there are fish. They're traditionally a six to 10 to 12 inch fish.

[00:09:14] And during the sort of primetime brook trout season here we're getting fish up to 24 inches. So.

[00:09:25] Yeah of course if if you're if you if you depend upon it and then our entire community depends upon it. I'm not talking just about tthe city of Treveli but in actual actuality they don't really know how much they depend upon it. But yeah that there is a recovery. It becomes sort of risk your responsibility when you're an outfitter and you're you're making a living on the resource to protect it. I mean obviously you're shooting yourself in the foot if you don't.

[00:09:56] So obviously, I shouldn't say obviously but to me the biggest the biggest threat right here to our natural resources will be the eventual mining. The Andes are rich in, in, in gold and silver a little bit off here on the step. We've got platinum palladium uranium. And our community in our area said no to mining. But you know no is not always no when it comes to crooked politicians when it comes to lobbying and when it comes to sort of economic needs. So that's the probably the biggest threat to our environment here. Climate change is certainly taking a toll right at the moment. And I think that that goes all over the world. We've been seeing an increase in temperature decrease in precipitation. Just in my short history of 20 years here. It's noticeable in that and now we're in this sort of banana belt coastal climate. We've planted a vineyard we've made wine in a place that 15 years ago if you would have thought about a vineyard, somebody would've call you crazy because you'd have been wearing a sweater. Glaciers are melting. So 20 to 30 years from now I can't imagine what it looks like unless there's a cycle, there's a change, there's a shift there's something that happens in those regards but particularly right now and you look at trout and salmon the biggest threat worldwide is, are mining, timber and sort of unregulated so to speak, irresponsible, unnethical practices of harvesting natural resources.

[00:11:51] Well that the best is availability. Someone that can go. Someone with patience, someone that makes you laugh. Someone you have fun with. It's always, catching fish it's

not not really the most important thing about going fishing. Having a great time and so the best fishing partner is someone that you really enjoy being with. And obviously if they're available to go fishing a lot they make an even better partner.

[00:12:24] Yeah that's right. That's actually a good question. So just jump in. Jump in and get started.

[00:12:34] Fly fishing for examples pretty complex you got expensive equipment rods reels lines waders boots flies. But start basics. I'm teaching right now my four children how to fish. You've just met Colter. He's five. My oldest is 12 but basically where I've taken it in short bursts go through standard casting practices but people love to tie flies. It's not all about just pounding the water and hitting the fish. It's about actually what leads up to fishing and enjoying all the parts and pieces of fishing. So somebody young getting into the sport you want to introduce them on a light and easy way and how to how to cast what the sport's about.

[00:13:17] People love to tie flies. They're very curious and especially younger folks that sort of gets them right away because kids like to play with their hands. My kids, I do no more than five minutes sort of casting practice at a time they can't they can't focus and casting learning how to cast learning how to fly fish can be a very frustrating and intimidating thing. But it's amazing amazing energy and feeling that you get of helping somebody experience something so wonderful.

[00:13:53] It gives you the second chance to trout fish in the same year. So. Southern Hemisphere is upside down. So you've got, um, we're fishing November until May and then the 2nd stage of fish basically May until November. So it gives you a second chance. I would say on average the fish are, the fish are bigger they're a little easier to catch. The scenery is similar to what you would have in mountainous United States but not quite some breathtaking vistas. The cultural experience is out of this world. The Argentines are wonderful and it is a magnificent beautiful wonderful place. And once again not every fishing trip is not about fishing. And Argentina offers this great cultural package in addition to fishing. And if you check the weather forecast right now in Melrose Montana or Bozeman Montana you're looking at minus something and snow which, skiing's great. But I prefer to spend my time fishing.

[00:14:54] Well. First off I'm glad you're doing it. Because when you.

[00:15:00] Oftentimes I look at the fly fishing industry it's so small. And it doesn't really matter to too many people.

[00:15:08] The number of people that fly fish and sort of the history upon it and in many ways I'm part of the history of this moment. I'm glad someone's taking care of it and protecting it and actually looking for archives and finding ways to preserve history. We have a friend. Jim Gallup, or Verne Gallup, who's donated a lot of volumes to Montana State. He actually owns a ranch an hour from here that we fish on and so through generous contributions from guys like Verne and guys like you that actually have a have a passion you want to sort of take care of. So I think a very important.

[00:15:56] I think that that the most important thing in fly fishing is having fun. But the second most is getting a crag free drift.

[00:16:04] That helps an awful lot. Changing flies. My, my dad used to always say yeah whenever anything fails change flies.

[00:16:13] All right. Hi Coulter and teach these kids how to fish.