

Flyfishing the Ash River at Clarens

By Derek Salzman



It was recently my extreme good fortune to fish the Ash River on Rob and Tali Silcock's farm outside Clarens. This is just a few kilometres below the outflow of the Highlands Water Scheme which releases Lesotho winter snow run off, into the upper Vaal catchment area. The water remains a crystal clear 13 degrees throughout the year as it has passed through close on 80k's of closed tunnel bringing it from Katse Dam.



There is a minimal local catchment area to discolor the river, as the farm is close to the outlet tunnel and therefore the river may be fished with a high degree of certainty throughout the year. This is more than one can say for most other venues where drought, closed season, recent rains or a heat wave often make them unfishable. This water stays at about 13 degrees as stated and this has brought healthy Trout down from the high Lesotho Mountains.

Rob who is also a fly fisherman will allow you to fish his waters if you hire his accommodation which is outside Clarens and close to the town. His guest house is called Caledon Country House at www.caledoncountryhouse.co.za .



I who am a very average angler, and that, is being kind to my fishing credentials, caught a nice brown and 3 rainbow in about 2 hours. I was not there during prime time either. It was a midmorning visit but fish were active.



This raises an interesting thought. Following on the current focus of Environmental Affairs relative to Trout, Are these fish, illegal aliens, and, if they are, what can we do about them. Well the answer is, talk as much as you like, but, there is nothing you can do about these particular foreigners. Maybe we just give them passports like we have for the other illegal aliens in the country. A compromise would be a stern diplomatic note to the Lesotho ambassador. After all we do have good relations with the Lesotho government and would like to keep these cordial.



Now for those of you less skilled in these things, but hopefully more skilled in fishing, the discussion goes like this.

“Darling I have been thinking that its time I treat you again. Why don’t just you and I, go to Clarens for a long weekend. It is such a beautiful venue, with art, boutiques, crafts, local produce, good restaurants, clear mountain air and cozy accommodation”

Remember to pack your fishing kit into the car, the week before you leave for Clarens so that it just happens to be there with you.

This line unfortunately stopped working for me at about the time I climbed off the Symphony cruise ship into the shore going dinghy, fly rod all rigged and firmly in hand. That it was our anniversary trip to Bazaruto Island seemed to have some mysterious extra meaning to my better half. I did catch a very nice small Kingie and the subsequent good lunch on shore reinstated the better half’s sense of humour.

The river has some areas which are open and will work very well on the dry fly in the late afternoon. Nymphing we know works well. Some areas below the bridge will challenge the experienced fisherman.

The farm road is good and your wife’s car will do fine. No need for your fuel guzzling 4x4.

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