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WOODS N WATERS NEWS
ADVENTURE FISHING
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By

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Fishing is an adventure. If you're lucky the adventure isn't just about catching fish, but also in getting to lakes few others have cast a lure into.

I've fished in some of the most remote fly-in lakes in North America, but I've never fished better waters than available through Pasha Lake Cabins out of Beardmore, Ontario. This unique drive-to outfitter has access to over 100 remote and seldom fished lakes teeming with everything from tasty yellow perch to monster northern pike, walleye, lake trout and brook trout.

Owner/operator Chad Thompson has since 2005 catered to anglers who are interested in what he calls "adventure fishing". "Some of the lakes our clients fish are only accessible by quad, snow machine or amphibious vehicle like an Argo," says Thompson. "These tough to access lakes provide the fly-in atmosphere and fishing action at a fraction of the cost. The value comes in sweat equity, because reaching the water is often an adventure in itself."

In addition to lakes that are challenging just to access, Pasha Lake Cabins is within easy reach of dozens of lakes that offer more conventional access sites including the world famous Lake Nipigon which holds the world record for brook trout.

Visiting anglers can bring their own boats and motors or rent equipment from Pasha Lake Cabins. On many of the best fishing lakes in the region, Chad has already stashed boats and motors for his customers to use. All the angler needs to tote in are gasoline, rods, reels and some favorite fishing lures.

My recent visit was primarily to be focused on targeting trophy pike, but I was pleasantly surprised to encounter world class action for brook trout and fast walleye action as well.

For the first two days our crew targeted pike with the goal of filming an episode of Fishing 411 TV for broadcast on the Sportsman Channel in 2011. That goal proved to be easy sledding. Both the lakes we fished were chuck full of quality pike ranging from 25 to 43 inches! Casting jumbo spinnerbaits, oversized jerkbaits and diving crankbaits I caught and released 50+ high quality pike in two days. Isolated patches of pond weed held the most pike, but I was also able to pick off good fish from rocky points and places where deep water and the shoreline collided.

With our pike goals secured, we turned our attention to walleye on day three. Turns out that this region of Ontario features a number of lakes that hold the famed blue walleye. Sometimes confused as a different species, the blue walleye is simply a color pigment variation of the walleyes Ontario is famous for.

In over 30 years of chasing walleye professionally, I had never seen or caught a blue walleye. On day three of our Pasha Lake Cabins adventure I landed over a dozen blue walleye ranging in size from 15 to 20 inches.

All our walleye were caught casting and dragging Bait Rigs Odd Ball jigs tipped with minnows and/or three inch Gulp Minnows. Live minnows produced a little better, but honestly if we had only fished the soft plastics the final outcome would have likely been identical.

Most of our fish came from isolated islands in water depths from 8 to 15 feet and main lake points.

Day four found us heading to Lake Nipigon to target brook trout and perhaps some monster northern pike. Sustained winds of 35 MPH made it impossible to even consider fishing Nipigon. Instead we opted for plan "B" and set out to fish another of the smaller isolated lakes in the region.

The constantly changing weather of northwestern Ontario is one of the benefits of targeting the smaller back woods lakes. No matter which direction the wind comes from or how hard it blows, a determined angler can always find water calm enough to fish.

Our problem on this particular day was simply finding the water. We used an Argo to drag in a small aluminum boat/motor/trailer. Somewhere along the trail we took a wrong turn and ended up helplessly confused. By the time we finally figured out our mistake, it was too late to attempt any serious fishing. Day four ended without even taking one cast, but we used the time to regroup for our fifth and final day of fishing.

Day five found us back on Lake Nipigon and this time the wind laid down and provided us an opportunity to explore a small part of this inland sea. One of the largest lakes in Canada, Lake Nipigon is world famous for its brook trout fishery and that's where we started.

We teamed up with Darren Goodman of Lake Nipigon Charters who used his commercial fishing vessel "the Jessie James" as a floating base of operation. A fourth generation commercial fisherman and confessed brook trout addict, few men know Lake Nipigon better than Darren Goodman. We towed a couple small fishing boats along including my Starcraft 160 Fishmaster. After a 26 mile run across the lake, we targeted brook trout by casting Little Cleos spoons along the rocky shorelines.

Darren guided us and struck brook trout gold first with a beautiful 18 inch female who was shaped more like a football than a trout. Lake Nipigon has a smelt population and all the trout here grow to enormous proportions. After releasing the fish on video we realized we had forgotten to take any still pictures. The daily bag limit for brook trout on Lake Nipigon is one fish over 22 inches, so the fish had to be released quickly.

Moments later I hooked a trophy trout and promptly lost it. It would be nearly 7 hours later before I would finally have my second chance. A 20 inch female darted out from the shadowed side of a submerged boulder and crushed my spoon. Holding that fish briefly in my hands may well have been one of my greatest accomplishments as an angler.

While a 20 inch brook trout hardly raises an eyebrow around Lake Nipigon, to me this was the fish of a lifetime. I grew up listening to reports of family members who fished Nipigon regularly and came home with big trout and even bigger adventure stories to share. Way back then, I was too young to be included on that annual trip.

Before I was old enough to be included on this trip, both my mother and grand father had died suddenly. Along with the passing of these family members, so did the Lake Nipigon tradition.

It took me more than 40 years to finally find my way to Lake Nipigon. Thankfully the wait was minor compared to the reward. Nothing is more sweet in life than setting a goal and finally achieving it. I think it's time to start a new Lake Nipigon tradition in the Romanack family. In fact, the 2011 dates are already set in stone.

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