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The lure of big-fish anglers happens North of 60

CONTENT FROM: GLOBE EDGE CONTENT STUDIO

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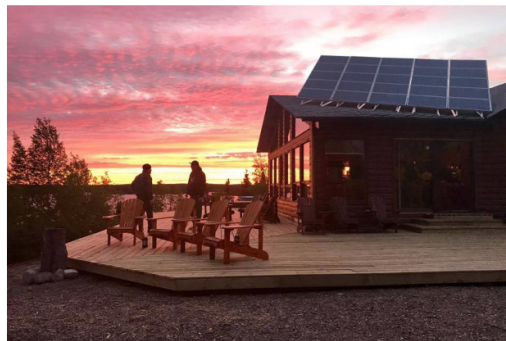


Big fish are plentiful at Scott Lake Lodge. (supplied)

Jason Hamilton was working as a marine mammal biologist in Canada's North when he was invited to spend two weeks as a fishing guide for Scott Lake Lodge. Without any hesitation, he accepted that offer from the Northwest Territories' most luxurious fly-in fishing lodge.

"That was seven years ago, and like everyone else who goes there I was hooked pretty quickly," says Hamilton, who is now the general manager of the lodge.

With its pristine remote location – on a small island in Scott Lake, near the Saskatchewan border, about 875 kilometres (540 miles) north of Saskatoon – the property offers conditions ideal for anglers in search of big fish.



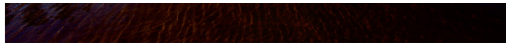
The Northwest Territories' most luxurious fly-in fishing lodge. (supplied)

Hamilton knows first-hand how a premier lodge in such a spectacular wilderness setting can easily win the heart of a fishing enthusiast. A full 85 per cent of Scott Lake Lodge customers are repeat visitors and nearly 70 per cent come every year. The majority of the guests have been visiting for more than 20 years, while some have 30 years of visits under their belts and a few can even boast of 40 years of stays.

"A visit here has become part of the annual cycle for so many people," says Hamilton. "The staff and guests all know each other by now, to the point where they'll book the same week each year, just so they can catch up with friends. It's an unbelievable fishery to start with. We have access to water as far as you want to fly."

Based on the numbers, that adds up to more than ten million acres (4046856 hectares) of fish-filled waters.





Flying in is part of the adventure. (supplied)

The powerful and agile northern pike get anglers' hearts racing when they chomp down on oversized lures, then dive deep once they get their first glimpse of a fishing boat. Chunky lake trout also stay down deep in the icy water, which requires equal parts patience and strength to lure them up.

And then there's the smaller but elusive Arctic grayling, a species that offers a challenge different from chasing the big predators. "[Catching graylings] is a softer kind of fishing," notes Hamilton. "You get out of the boat, walk through the streams and rivers, slow down, fish at the waterfalls and really become part of the environment."

Still, many anglers prefer fly fishing, which, says Hamilton, is a growing sector. "Luckily, all of our guides are great fly fishers and excellent teachers. We can pretty much guarantee you'll catch your first fish on the fly up here."



The Scott Lake Lodge guides are excellent anglers and teachers, making it almost guaranteed guests will catch a fish. (supplied)

Mindful too that guests are typically hungry and thirsty after a full day on the water, the lodge features happy hour right on the waterfront, just a few steps off the boat. Full dinner service with complementary wines begins at 7 p.m. In the upscale rustic dining room, recently remodelled for the 2018 season. An enticing post-dinner option would be a nightcap in the outdoor hot tub or perhaps a visit to the on-site Stone Haven Spa for a deep-tissue massage – the perfect ending to an exhilarating day of fly-fishing.

A short stroll down the hill, on a path dusted with fresh wood chips from the boreal forest, are the free-standing waterfront cabins. These upscale accommodations offer fine bedding, plush robes and deluxe toiletries, as well as turndown service – delightful amenities not typical for a remotely located lodge. And after a refreshingly deep sleep, thanks to the fresh forest air, guests can look forward to starting the day with piping-hot coffee delivered to their cabins.



The water, big skies and spectacular views are part of what makes Scott Lake Lodge so special. (supplied)

"We've developed a real culture of customer service," Hamilton says proudly. "It's exciting, motivating and fun to be part of it. [And] there's always input from the ownership, staff and clients. We're constantly improving, expanding and refining what we do."

It's that attention to detail that makes the lodge a destination of choice, not just for the fly-fishing aspect but also as a setting for those big life moments. "Last year, we had a marriage proposal here," says Hamilton. "She said yes, and this year, the couple are returning for their honeymoon."

There is also a little something extra that sets Scott Lake Lodge apart from the pack, he adds. "The Holy Grail might not be exactly the right term, but when you go north of the 60th Parallel, you are in the midst of true wilderness. It's a whole other level of remoteness, and that makes the experience special."

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