



What You Need To Know

Okay, so the rates are steep. But it's a lot less expensive than flying to Alaska to get skunked (my summer vacation). Take guide George Beasley's word for it: "You come here, you're pretty much gonna catch fish." We add: Yes, if you get a guide.

- Rod fee: \$250 per day, per angler
- Guide fee (optional): \$150 per guide (for two people)
- The Lodge (sleeps eight): \$500 per night year-round
- B&B room: \$225 September-November and March-June
- Catered meals: Varies by group



The Soque (Suh-QWEE) River begins in the Blue Ridge Mountains and winds through Clarkesville, Georgia. Fishing guides and a friendly vibe make even fly-fishing novices feel welcome here.

It's the moment I dream about—wading in the shallows, waiting. In a flash, a big trout strikes. My rod bends as he runs for the deeps. It's not my first, but a 12-pound rainbow sends my heart racing every time. Over my shoulder, I hear a young man gasp. "My god," he says. "It's Shamu!"

This is coming from a Canadian fishing guide. It's clearly his first time to my favorite spot, the Soque River. This world-class stream holds rainbows and browns so big they shock the waders off this Canuck. And it's right here in North Georgia. Impressive, eh?

Big Fish—Guaranteed!

You could go to Alaska to catch a trophy trout, but North Georgia is closer. By **Kim Cross**

Secrets of the Soque This is one of those legendary "miracle mile" streams that draws anglers to remote corners of big-sky states. But this hidden spot—it kills me to give it away—lies less than two hours north of Atlanta. The fish are always home (and big) at Blackhawk Fly-Fishing, a mile-and-a-half private stretch of stream, complete with a fly shop and cushy fishing camp. With a guide's help, you can land trophy trout of the sort worth bragging about to incredulous grandkids.

"Welcome to the Soque," says my favorite guide, George Beasley. (I call him the fish whisperer.) "Of all the places in the world you can take a plane or ride a mule, there's nowhere you can catch a fish bigger than here."

One Friendly Fish Camp It's no testosterone fest. Owner Abby Jackson gabs my ear off like any gal pal—then shamelessly out-fishes the men. As passionate about cooking as she is about angling, Abby does both with style. She adds little extras (baked Brie, anyone?) that pamper women without infringing upon our hubbies' machismo.

When I come with my family and friends, we enjoy the rustic lodge's bunk-style rooms, shared showers, and outdoor fire pit. We love Abby's spicy chili and grilled cheese lunches, and her hearty family-style suppers. Remember, though, it's all about the fish. One bite and you'll be hooked. ●

Blackhawk Fly-Fishing: www.blackhawkflyfishing.com or (706) 947-3474.

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