



Private fly-fishing appointments can be made along the Provo River in Utah.



Angler's Paradise

From coast to coast, adventurers can find a thrill when traversing waters with a rod and reel in hand.

BY JOE RADA

Whether throwing a lure into a tumbling mountain stream or wading waist deep into a breezy salt marsh, the allure of sport fishing emanates from the underlying adrenaline rush—it's a pursuit that can be at once serene and exhilarating. For anglers awaiting a tug on the line, the mood can change instantly from peaceful to rousing.

"Those who haven't gone fishing before find out what the sport is all about, and those who are already familiar with it explore some of the best places in the world to catch fish," says Andy Damman, corporate director of recreation for Montage Hotels & Resorts. "Either way, they're in for a nice day in a magnificent setting. One of the best things about Montage resorts is that they're all in really close proximity to great waters for fishing."

Damman's home base, Montage Deer Valley in Utah, provides thrills to anglers during guided outings on several cold, clear rivers flowing swiftly nearby through the Wasatch Range in the Rocky Mountains. "To wade into a river, spot a rainbow trout or a brown trout, and watch it rise toward the fly you've just dropped on the water's surface is a powerful sensation you won't soon forget," he says. "Every day here, there's a chance for people to catch their first fish. Every day—and we fish year-round—there's a chance for someone to catch a once-in-a-lifetime trophy fish."

From Utah's rugged mountains to California and Hawaii's offshore depths and South Carolina's intertwining coastal waterways, Montage resorts span different terrains, species and tackle. What they do share, however, is a common sportfishing philosophy based on sustainability. "We encourage catch-and-release practices at all of our properties," Damman says, with the exception of locations that provide the option to cook up a catch. "Our goal is to show guests a great time outdoors but also to sustain the fisheries and maintain healthy fish populations. Sportfishing is really all about the experience, and we want people to be able to keep enjoying that experience again and again."



Utah's Provo River is less than a 20-minute drive from Montage Deer Valley.

Upstream in Utah

Several blue-ribbon fly-fishing rivers—with plentiful fish, spectacular settings and legendary catches—flow within easy reach of Montage Deer Valley. The popular Provo River is closest, a less than 20-minute drive from the hotel, and the Duchesne and Weber rivers lie about 45 minutes away, each tumbling from craggy canyons into gradually greener valleys. The Green River, two hours away, cuts through high and dry alpine desert terrain that's a marvel to behold. Fishermen in search of wily trout can either wade into shallow waters or, on deeper stretches of the lower Provo and Green, drift along in small watercraft.

"The Provo is tucked between the Wasatch Mountains and the Uinta Mountains and meanders through a series of canyons and valleys," Damman says. "It hosts an estimated 3,000 trout per mile. That's a very healthy population of rainbows and browns, some of them trophy size and real fighters when you get one on your line."

Guests who want to fly-fish often sign up for guided half-day or all-day outings, both led by riverman Joe Mitchell of Stonybrook Fly Fishing Consultants or some of his crew. "[Joe] has spent 30-plus years on trout streams all through the



Marlin can be found near Kapalua Bay.

Rockies," Damman says. "Some of his patents on tied flies [artificial bait designed to resemble local insects] have become industry standards.

"When you fish with Joe, you go in groups of three or less and spread out, so you have a stretch of river to yourself," Damman adds. "All the gear you need is provided: rods, reels, waders [and] nets. Plus, you use Joe's unique flies that are particular to insects hatching on that river at that time, greatly increasing your chances the fish will bite."

On all-day outings, guides prepare lunch for guests to enjoy streamside, and patrons also learn valuable lessons in fly-fishing etiquette, like how to read a river for fish, cast a fly rod properly and

handle trout delicately, as well as the finer points of a sustainable catch-and-release approach to the sport.

"Every time I fish with Joe and his guides, I feel honored to be on the river with them," Damman says. "They help you fall in love with all aspects of fly-fishing."

Casting in South Carolina

Guests of Montage Palmetto Bluff in Bluffton, S.C., cast for a wide variety of game fish on an intertwining network of waterways much different than in Utah. Leaving on charters from Wilson Landing marina adjacent to the hotel, anglers ply freshwater rivers and creeks, or reach lakes teeming with largemouth bass. They can also venture into tidal saltwater lagoons, sounds rimmed by grassy salt marshes, and swift currents ebbing and flowing between barrier islands. Or, a 5-mile trek into the Atlantic Ocean leads to man-made reefs submerged as fish habitat.

Sought-after species include cobia in spring, king mackerel and tarpon in summer, red drum in fall, and black sea bass, flounder and sheepshead in winter. Local guides piloting two-passenger, 20-foot flats boats inshore or four-passenger,



Anglers staying at Montage Palmetto Bluff can ply freshwater rivers and creeks.

24-foot catamarans offshore revel in describing characteristics of each species. They take pride in knowing where to find them and how to catch them, whether standing leisurely on a flats boat while delicately holding light spinning tackle or being belted into a swivel chair while muscling heavy line over churning waves.

Trolling the California Coast

Fishing adventures from Montage Laguna Beach depart from Dana Wharf, a short, scenic drive south from the resort. Deep sea fishing vessels quickly reach the fish-laden dark blue waters along the Pacific coast.

Most trips head south to the San Clemente and San Onofre areas, where fish congregate among rocks and swaying kelp forests. Sand bass, rockfish and halibut are mainstays. Occasionally, legendary runs of powerful dorado (also called mahi-mahi) and bluefin tuna pass through. Whether in small groups on private charters or alongside dozens



Grilled mahi prepared by Montage Laguna Beach staff

aboard party boats that hold up to 60 passengers, this big-rig fishing utilizes hefty spinning rods and reels, a sturdy 20-pound-test line and weights to help sink bait and hooks down near lofty prizes.

"The best parts about fishing from Dana Wharf are close proximity, a family-friendly atmosphere, experienced crews and well-maintained boats," says Montage Laguna Beach Chef Concierge Linda Hauser, who helps arrange outings. Plus, anglers can bring their catches back to the hotel's five-star restaurant, Studio, where Executive Chef Craig Strong will prepare the fish as part of a custom meal paired perfectly with fine wines.

Hooking Hawaiian Giants

Truly deep waters surround the Hawaiian Islands, offering a wealth of room for fish to roam and plenty of angling escapades for guests at Montage Kapalua Bay. Anglers looking for hefty catches can charter high-speed boats that head far from shore and utilize heavy gear to reel in game fish such as marlin, known for their spear-like bills and tendency to leap dramatically into the air.

"I call that 'arm-tiring' fishing," Damman says. "When you spend half an hour or more bringing one in, strapped into a fighting chair and maybe taking turns with someone else while you catch your breath, it's an experience like no other."

Others choose Lucky Strike Charters, boasting a 20-passenger, 50-foot vessel called Lucky Strike II that is based at Lahaina Harbor, 20 minutes from the resort. These excursions stay closer to shore, trolling shallower waters alongside Molokai, Lanai, Maui or other islands depending on wind, wave conditions and reports from other fishermen. Depending on the season, Hawaii anglers go after game fish such as marlin, sailfish, swordfish, mahi-mahi, wahoo, yellowfin tuna,

GEARING UP

While Montage guests can count on the resorts' outfitters to supply all the gear needed, those who want to begin collecting their own equipment for fly-fishing can start with these four items.

The G4Z STOCKINGFOOT waders from Simms Fishing are constructed with five-layer Gor-Tex Pro Shell fabric as well as a YKK waterproof zipper for increased durability, breathability and protection during excursions, \$849.95, at simmsfishing.com.



Handcrafted on Bainbridge Island, Wash., Sage's 9-foot 590-4 MOD freshwater rod is designed with the trout angler in mind and features a half-wells cork handle, \$850, at safeflyfish.com.



Be prepared to reel in a big catch with the MIRAGE FLY REEL VII-D in black nickel, boasting a quick-release spool and positive-click drag nob, \$545 at orvis.com.

Polarized sunglasses are a must-have for any angler, and Costa's built-by-hand JOSE shades offer 100 percent ultraviolet light blockage, scratch-resistant lenses and stunning clarity, \$259, at costadelmar.com.



bigeye tuna and skipjack tuna.

"A personal favorite of mine is ahi," says Montage Kapalua Bay Concierge Jeramiah McMullin. "It's a big, red, meaty fish used in a local dish called poke [Hawaiian for slice or cut] that involves cubed pieces served with different sauces."

"The best part about our fishing is the proximity to world-class game fish so close to the harbor," McMullin adds. "Many fishing destinations require several hours of running just to get to the fishing grounds, but here you can drop the lures right outside the marina."

Whether guests find a welcoming spot in the marina or choose to follow the fish to a deeper destination, the sport is an opportunity to disconnect and find serenity in the natural beauty surrounding them. "I've noticed," Damman says, "that when people get fishing rods in their hands, most of them turn off their cellphones, tune out day-to-day worries and focus on having a good time and catching fish." **M**