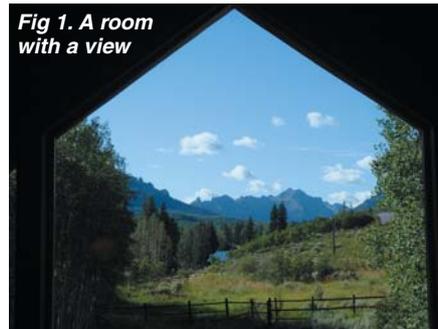


# Trout Fishing etc in Colorado

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## Introduction

After three days in the mile high city of Denver my wife and I flew to Grand Junction to begin six days vacation based in the spectacularly beautiful Cimarron valley. We stayed in the log cabin of our friends Don and Deyon – what a room with a view it had (fig 1).



**Fig 1. A room with a view**

In Denver we visited the Molly Brown House Museum named after the *Titanic* survivor ([www.mollybrown.org](http://www.mollybrown.org)) and also two very different fishing tackle shops: the huge chain store 'Bass Pro' where every fly was individually barcoded (fig 2) and the small



**Fig 2. Barcoded flies**

family run 'Trouts' which had some unusually named flies for sale (see fig 3).



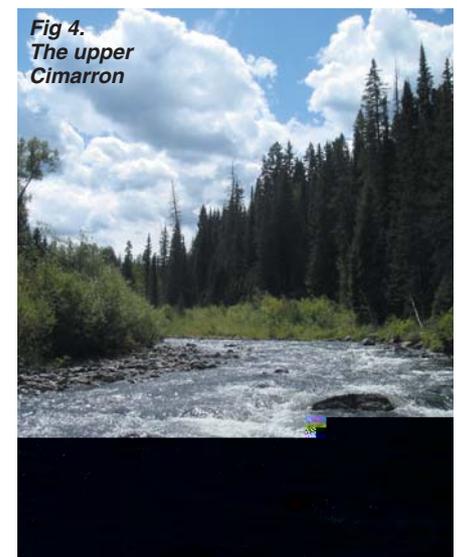
**Fig 3. Unusual named flies!**

We also attended a Mercy Ships Board Meeting at which a decision was made to remove all six engines on board the *Africa Mercy* ([www.mercyships.org.uk](http://www.mercyships.org.uk)) and to replace them with four modern ones to eliminate the noise pollution which has made two of the six on-board operating theatres and one ward unusable at times. I also gave 40 minute presentations at two fundraising events as a result of which two more of the seven new anaesthesia machines required for the *Africa Mercy* have now been pledged. The model chosen is the Paragon Platinum SC430 made by Penlon at a significant discount price for Mercy Ships of only \$19,000 each. I met Dr Ron, a member of a 55-strong anaesthesiology practice based in Denver who is very keen to work on board the *Africa Mercy* and to encourage his colleagues, both anaesthetists and surgeons to do likewise.

## Back to the Fishing

15-13, 17-10, 2-9, 3-0, 1-0. Fly-fishing as we fishermen know is never competitive but -----!!

My friend Don and I fished three different rivers and one small lake. The Upper Cimarron (fig 4) and the



**Fig 4. The upper Cimarron**

San Miguel with similar flow rates were both well stocked with small hard fighting wild rainbows (fig 5) and the occasional brown trout (fig 6).

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A major difference was that on the Cimarron almost all the 28 trout we caught (and released) fell to up stream nymphs of varying patents. While on the San Miguel we were accompanied by fishing guide Marshall (fig 7) and all the trout



were caught on an imitation caddis fly fished dry. Marshall was a retired electrical engineering contractor who had worked for several years in both Thailand and Ghana (Port of Takoradi) where he had visited the Mercy Ship *Anastasis* in 1998. The stretch of the San Miguel we fished was situated near Placeville, once a renowned gold mining town.

### Black Canyon of the Gunnison River

<http://www.gunnisonriverexpeditions.com/index.php>

For our third successive day's fishing Don and I left his cabin at 6.00am for the hour's drive to Montrose where we had breakfast at MacDonald's. We met our guide along with others at 7.15 am in Olathe. After a twelve and a half mile drive over rough

terrain we reached the Chukar Trail Head (named after the Hungarian Partridge introduced in the 1960s) from where we walked (fig 8) the



mile and a half down to the bottom of the canyon to find the self bailing white water rafts and our guide (fig 9).



During the drive I chatted to a 72-year-old surgeon from Oklahoma who was still involved in training programs for surgical residents. He told me about the year he spent during the Vietnam war in a MASH unit where he had gained fantastic experience operating for 16 hours day by day followed by 8 hours rest.

The journey on the Gunnison river down 14 miles of the Black Canyon was amazing. It alternated between grade 3 or 4 white water rapids (fig 10) followed by prolonged calmer stretches where we fished.



If one concentrated too hard on the fishing one missed the spectacular

scenery (fig 11) vertical rock faces



encroaching on both sides like the aptly named President Nixon's nose (fig 12).



Our boatman Jason had worked as a guide for eleven years, up to six times a week during the peak season. He was reputed to be one of the top guides and had even taken former president Jimmy Carter 'into the crack and back' a couple of months before. In the winter he built houses and had also been involved with construction projects in Kenya with a group from his church, on one journey they had visited the *Africa Mercy* in Newcastle. At the start of our trip he expressed surprise when Don selected a 2 lb leader and he recommended at least 10 lb to prevent breakages which might result from hooking overhanging foliage on the banks in an effort to land a 'Red Chernobyl' (grass hopper imitation) millimetres from the river's edge, where hungry trout were often to be found.

Fig 10. W

## Trout Fishing etc in Colorado

Don and I both hooked and lost many fish but he had more success in bringing the fish to the net and finished 9-2 in the lead with one superb trout of about 5lbs (fig 13).



Fig 13.  
What a beauty

A couple of days later after an enjoyable lunch with locals at a café in Lake City (fig 14) we fished



Fig 14.  
Lunch with the locals

a fork of the Gunnison river some miles upstream from the Black Canyon. Although the stretch of river included some of the most productive looking pools we had seen during the week, we only caught one trout between us in two hours before our patient wives wanted to return to the cabin.

During their walk the ladies passed a nearby campsite where most of the vehicles had fishing rods attached, perhaps fish had already been caught and kept even though it was meant to be *catch and release* only.

### Cow Puncher Lake

Our penultimate afternoon we went for a thirty minute quad bike ride up through the forest to fish this lake.

Remembering my visit three years ago I had purchased some small red coloured shrimp imitations which I thought might mimic the stable diet of the resident trout. These proved to be very successful as within an hour I had three good fish on the

bank all around two lbs in weight. The technique involved using a dry fly tied 18 in up the cast as a strike indicator.

Poor Don had one of those afternoons one would prefer to forget! First of all he had trouble tying his knots, then his leader was snapped by the first fish he hooked.

He lost two or three more fish before somehow managing to hook the handle and holster of a .44 magnum pistol which he had brought for our protection following reports of a large bear in the vicinity of the lake!

### In Summary

[http://www.nps.gov/blca/planyourvisit/upload/portal\\_2009.pdf](http://www.nps.gov/blca/planyourvisit/upload/portal_2009.pdf)

If you have the chance to go fishing in Colorado – do. There are hundreds of miles of free fishing although one does need to purchase a fishing permit which is inexpensive and available online. The scenery is spectacular and remote, the trout are all wild and hard fighting for their size. It is advisable on a first visit to a river to hire a guide. In the fast flowing rivers like the Cimarron and the San Miguel the trout tended to lie in the calmer water behind boulders or on the edge of the main rushing stream. I learned to use different techniques: fishing either an upstream nymph on its own or hanging by about 18 inches of nylon from the bend of a suitable size and pattern of dry fly. Certainly in the Black Canyon it was often difficult to prevent one's fly dragging without frequent 'mending' and the trout did not seem interested unless the fly was floating down naturally at the normal flow rate of the river.

Our ten day holiday ended in style after being upgraded at no extra cost by British Airways to Club Class on the return flight to London as well the outbound flight to Denver. The ability of the seats to fully recline makes a huge difference as one arrives home less tired after the nine hour journey.



Fig 15.  
Success at last.  
The dog seems impressed!

PS. Don eventually had a successful visit to Cowpuncher Lake – he sent me this picture from his I-phone (fig 15).