

Bass fishing is a great way to unwind

Earning some well-deserved R&R on Lake Delevan

by Dave Gibson

When my grandfather, dad, and I hired a boat and trolled Lake Michigan for salmon over 35 years ago, it was one of a dozen fishing experiences I had while living in the mid-west. Hours went by without a bite and our catch tally was a single Coho weighing five pounds. The real highlight that day was the all-you-can-eat smelt fry at the end of our lackluster outing.

In 1982 I moved to Colorado and discovered trout fishing. I have since angled many of the state's streams, rivers, and reservoirs. A few fish stand out from those adventures including an 18 inch brook trout from Steamboat Lake and an 8 pound northern pike out of Spinney Reservoir. Smaller fish than those have been the general rule, but I've been content wading convenient nearby creeks, sometimes catching ten fish per hour on my trusty black and gold Panther Martin spinning lure. I've also

been "skunked." Numbers are nice, but after a while one long for "the big one." A fishing adventure in Alaska yielded a 35 pound halibut and ling cod, along with a 15 lb. rockfish. Florida provided a spirited redbfish, and in Mexico this past April, I landed a monstrous 90 pound amberjack – the biggest fish I've ever caught! Hiring a fishing guide can be a hit or miss proposition, but with proper timing and a little luck, it can pay off in huge dividends. It's hard to beat local knowledge when it comes to catching trophy fish.

Last week I drove to Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, where my relatives still live, to roof a portion of my brother Dan's house. The temperatures reached 102 degrees with the humidity at least 80 percent and only a wisp of a breeze. Even though I would start work at six in the morning, by ten o'clock I was drenched in sweat. By noon my body was spent and continuing was impractical if not impossible. After four days drudgery and roof complete, the lake was beckoning. On Dan's 20 foot speedboat, we created our own wind and anchored by shore for a rejuvenating swim in the cool waters. I still

had two days before my scheduled return to Colorado, and my thoughts turned to fishing.

Geneva Lake Bait & Tackle in Williams Bay, WI, offers charter fishing throughout the year on Geneva Lake, Lauderdale Lake, Lake Delevan, and Lake Como. With a bargain rate of \$120 for up to two people for a half day with bait and sodas included, I couldn't believe that I hadn't come up with the idea sooner during one of my many visits back home. Water skiing was the focus then before I had fully experienced charter fishing. Still sore from roofing, fishing was a more inviting option this time. Set to depart at 4 p.m. on Lake Delevan, which is less than half the size of Geneva Lake at approximately three miles wide by one mile long, we could expect to catch largemouth bass, with a chance at smallmouth bass, northern pike, and walleye. Unable to entice Dan or any of his family members to come along, I met my charter boat captain at the boat ramp. He was around forty years old with long frizzy hair and a belly that could have only been created with the assistance of beer. Still plagued by 95 degree temper-

atures, we launched and motored a short distance anchoring near a pier. My captain, whose name is the same as my brother's and easy to remember, was having a hard go of things. Sweating profusely, he knocked over his lemonade educating expletives. Every time a boat would pass creating a wake – even a small one, he would stare them down throwing his hands in the air while mumbling more colorful words. As my brother put it when speaking of the strained relationship between fisherman and other boaters, "We hate each other." Fishermen are usually sitting in the calmer water by shore where Dan likes to ski. Although the waves don't affect fishing, after years of being tossed about they had my charter guide seeing red.

After a few casts with a night crawler under the dock, I set the hook into a nice bass! With light tackle it gave a good struggle weighing in at four pounds. Its stomach bulged. My biggest largemouth of six pounds would not have been landed had it not been for tutelage from my guide. With a big fish "on the line," it ran for the piling of the pier when the captain screamed, "Pull to the right!" Still

"on" he yelled, "Pull to the left!" Five fighting minutes passed before we netted the "hog." Several good bass were brought aboard by Captain Dan and I. Fishing was great!

After a few hours at that location, we headed for the other side of the lake. My guide's earthworm angling technique was more refined and successful than mine, but now we were fishing with leeches that swam off the bottom and all I had to do was sit and wait. On an even playing field, I caught more fish than he - including four big bass, a respectable pike, a wall-eye, a very chunky bullhead, and a bluegill. It was so exciting watching a big bass jump out of the water, even though he was shaking my hook while escaping to deeper waters. The aerial display was so great, that I wasn't the least bit concerned over losing him! Even Captain Dan was relaxed after a satisfying day spent fishing.

With the sun setting over the lake, Captain Dan pulled up anchor and cursed again at another boat going by - some things will never change.



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