

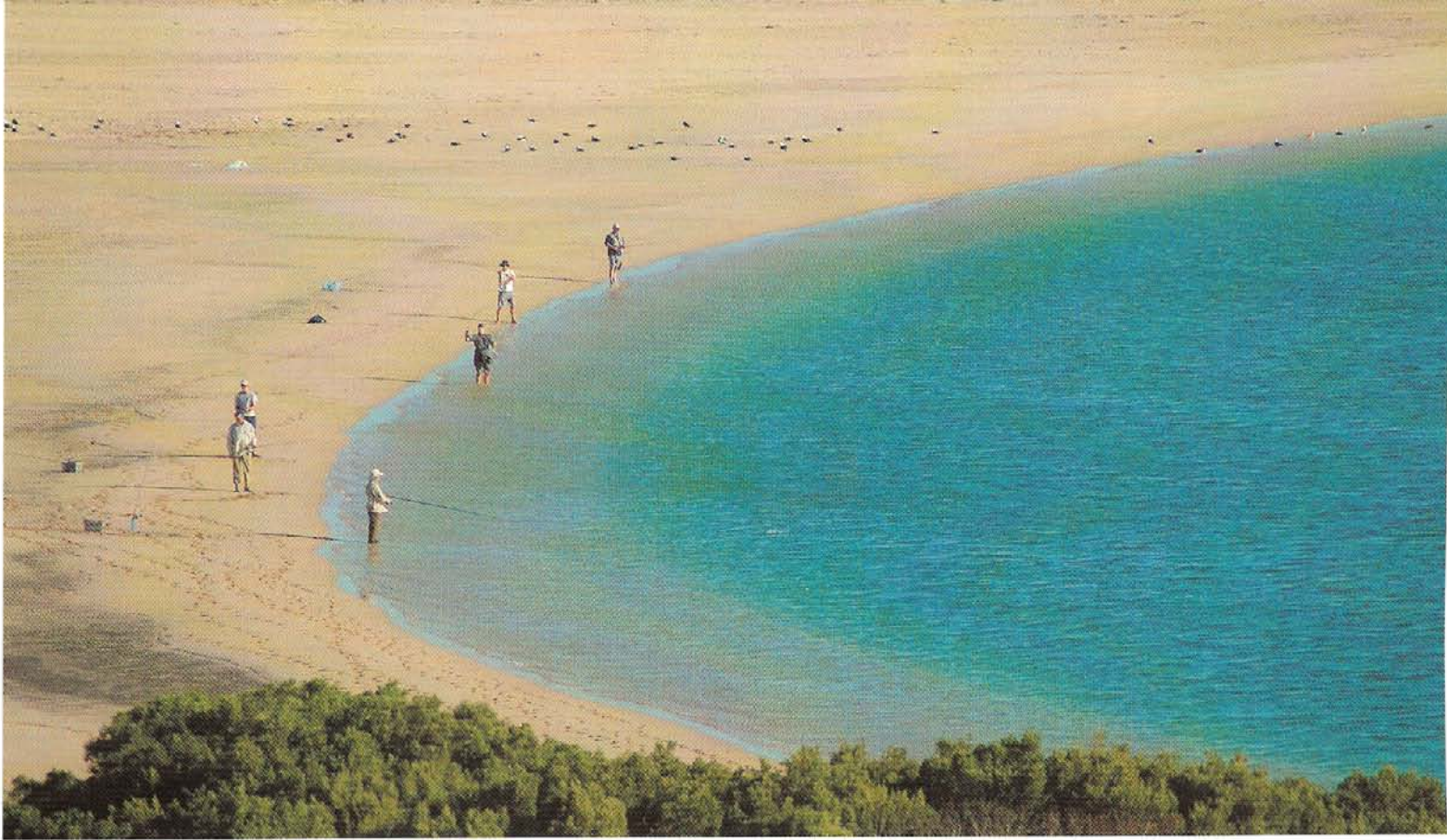


# Fruits of the Cape



*Amid the hustle and bustle of a vibrant city lays a myriad of secret fishing opportunities for anglers of all skill levels.*

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**T**able Mountain, Cape Point, the Waterfront, the Wine Route, Kirstenbosch Gardens, Robben Island all spring immediately to mind when one thinks of the Mother City and the surrounding Western Cape. World famous sights that draw hoards of tourists to the city year after year, these attractions are at the center of Cape Town's international appeal, and lead the way in South Africa's booming tourism industry. Yet in the heart of it all, amongst the development and hustle and bustle of a thriving and vibrant city, lie a bundle of little known and well kept piscatorial secrets that produce world class fishing opportunities set amidst truly beautiful and often dramatic scenery. From tiny wild trout streams, smooth flowing bass rivers and explosive offshore flyfishing, the Western Cape truly offers dynamic and appealing fresh and saltwater fisheries for anglers of every skill level.

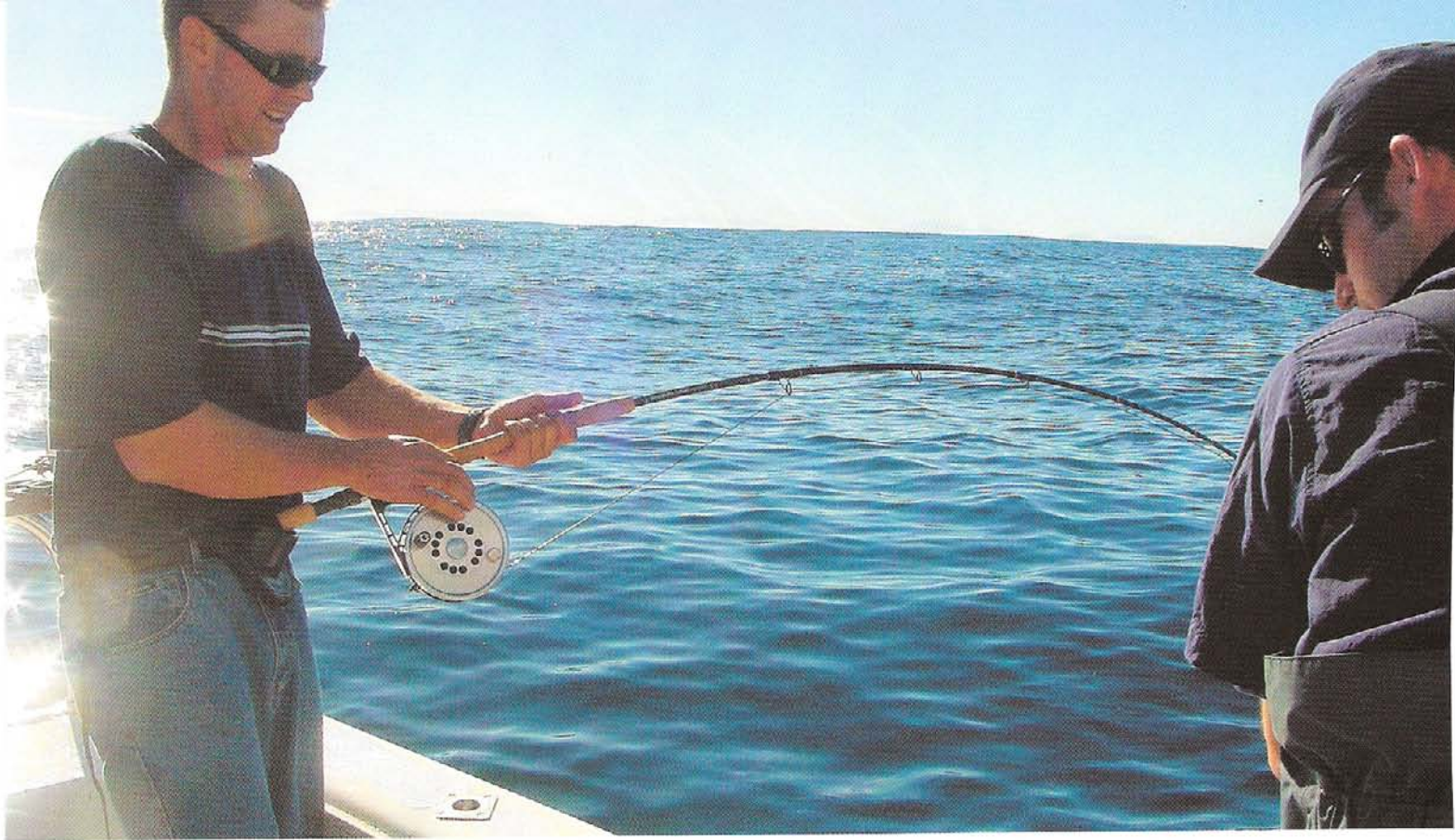
### Cape Streams

Barely an hour's drive from the center of Cape Town, past the beautiful and picturesque wine farming towns of Paarl and Franschoek, cool and crystal clear freestone trout streams pour from the craggy mountains between Cape Town, Worcester and Ceres. Tumbling and bubbling their way down the long, rugged kloofs and valleys, below majestic peaks or through narrow gorges these streams hold healthy populations of wild rainbow and brown trout, as well as a variety of small and sometimes rare indigenous fish. Trout were introduced into these waters more than 100 years ago, and have survived and bred in the wild ever since. Although not of any great size, they are feisty and hardy little fish that readily rise to feed off the surface, making these supremely clear streams a dry fly fisherman's paradise.

Being in a winter rainfall area, the water levels are generally low and clear during the annual summer trout season (September to May), and are quite fast flowing, as they are mostly of a high gradient. The most commonly

fished rivers in the area are the Smalblaar, Molenaars, Elandspad, Holsloot, Witte, Jan du Toits and the Witels – and all are governed by a strict catch-and-release policy. Divided into beats and controlled by the Cape Piscatorial Society, they vary dramatically in size, shape, accessibility and surrounding scenery. The river banks are lined with shrubs and bush, some indigenous and some alien invaders, with local "fynbos" common on some rivers, especially in the more remote upper reaches. Offering glimpses of wild buck and small deer, baboons, monkeys and reasonable bird life, a day out on the streams is more than just about fishing, but is a chance to escape into the wilderness and enjoy nature at its finest. Once one climbs down into one of the valleys that house the streams, the peace and quiet is so complete that you could easily be many miles from civilisation, and soon you will find yourself slipping into the peaceful mood of the beautiful and tranquil surroundings.

The fishing is mostly in pocket water, but there are sections of some rivers that have long pools, riffles and runs – especially on some of the bigger rivers such as the Smalblaar and Molenaars. Fishing all these Cape rivers is a unique and challenging experience, and under most circumstances a stealthy approach is required in order to enjoy success. Small dry flies and tiny nymphs fished on super light rods, long leaders and hair thin tippets are the norm on these intricate streams. Established dry fly patterns such as RABS, parachute Adams, small black mayfly imitations and attractor patterns such as Humpy's and Kaufman's Stimulators work well, as do tiny low floating caddis imitations like Goddard's caddis and Elk-hair Caddis. Nymphs that produce well are small weighted patterns such as Hare's Ears, Pheasant Tails, Flashbacks and Zaks – tied on hooks ranging from size 18 – 24. With these tiny flies, super light tippets and delicate presentations, fishing the technical Cape Streams will appeal to the fly fishing "purist", and provide a challenge to even the most seasoned of anglers. ▶



### Trout stillwaters

Dotted around the majestic mountains in the wine country around Cape Town, a limited number of lakes and reservoirs offer excellent still water trout fishing for all anglers - novice and expert alike. Fishing from the shoreline as well as world-class floating tubing is available for day or overnight trips. Smaller dams such as Paarl Mountain Dams and established trout venues such as Dewdale and Jonkershoek are great places for the beginner fishing from the shore, and being less than 45 minutes from Cape Town are readily accessible.

The Western Cape's premier still water, Lakenvlei Dam is situated approximately 2 hours from the centre of Cape Town above the small fruit-farming town of Ceres. This beautiful high altitude lake produces good sized browns and rainbows in cold, crystal clear water, and is ideally suited to float tubing. With a snug and cosy cabin on the shore (controlled by the Cape Piscatorial Society), it is the ideal destination for over night or weekend fly-fishing getaways. Spring through to autumn are the prime months for fishing Lakenvlei, but be warned, it can get pretty chilly up there during the winter months.

### Bass rivers

Three main rivers drain the Western Cape area, each dammed in places to provide water for agricultural and metropolitan use, and all hold thriving populations of black bass, which produce great spring and autumn sport on fly. In the north, the Olifants River runs through the super clean Clanwilliam and Bulshoek Dams, closer to Cape Town the Berg River runs through the town of Paarl and feeds Voelvlei and Miverstand Dams, and to the east the largest of them all, the mighty Breede River winds its way through Theewaterskloof and Brandvlei Dams on its way to the coast where it joins the Indian Ocean at the small coastal town of Witsand.

All the rivers and dams in the area hold largemouth, small mouth and spotted black bass, and although all

three species are highly regarded sport fish, one should not forget that all the species are aliens and have had a devastating effect on many indigenous fish in these rivers. Every effort must be made to keep them from entering the last remaining headwaters of the few pristine rivers in the Western Cape, for fear of destroying the existing fish populations in these rivers.

Largemouth and smallmouth bass dominate the rivers and dams, with spotted bass much less common than either of the above two species. Preferring a rocky habitat and fast flowing water, smallmouth are most common in Voelvlei, Clanwilliam and Bulshoek Dams, as well as in the Berg River. Largemouth on the other hand prefer slow flowing water with lots of structure such as submerged logs, weed beds and overhanging trees, and Theewaterskloof Dam and the slower sections of Breede River in particular are excellent largemouth fisheries.

Autumn and spring are prime times for bass, and fishing during these seasons, especially during low light conditions (bass are particularly light sensitive) can provide some aggressive feeding and explosive fishing. Fishing the dams by boat or float tube is ideal, and a day trip down the Breede River through the magnificent farming and wine lands on a float tube is a rewarding and memorable fishing experience.

### Saltwater

The area surrounding Cape Town offers saltwater anglers a variety of exciting fishing opportunities, both shore based and from a boat. Offshore, shoals of powerful and hard fighting Cape yellowtail abound in the deep waters around Cape Point and False Bay in summer, and these fish provide great sport on fly when the conditions are right. Shoals the size of football fields can show up in summer, and sight casting surface flies to hundreds of hungry yellowtail as the birds dive and crash around them is thrilling and adrenaline pumping experience. Further out to sea, off the continental shelf in the warm waters of the ocean currents,



exists a world-class deep-water yellowfin and longfin tuna fishery that year after year attracts big game anglers from all over the world to Cape Town during the tuna season. This is a remarkable fishery, and continues to produce many fish in the 100 kg class. Fly anglers have the option of sight casting to these brutes, but tend to concentrate on the smaller specimens and the more manageable longfin tuna—although the largest specimen taken on fly to date is a massive 78kg! Because the tuna grounds are sometimes as far as 40 miles offshore, and Cape Town is often subjected to strong southeasterly winds during the summer months, this fishery is very weather dependant and a flexible schedule is recommended.

Although summer is a prime time for fishing, in the winter months, enormous shoals of hungry Cape Snoek magically appear in the waters around Cape Town. Although snoek are an important commercial species, they are also regarded as a sport fish. These ferocious barracuda-like predators eat anything that comes within range, and give a superb workout on a fly rod. Averaging around 5kg, snoek hold slightly deeper in the water column, and sinking lines are required to get the fly down to where they are feeding. They have extremely sharp teeth and wire tippets are required to prevent bite-offs. When the run is in full swing and a shoal is located, numerous fish can be hooked in quick succession, and it is quite possible to take up to 50 fish per angler on fly in a day, leaving weary anglers and tattered tackle behind.

For land based anglers, the south and west coasts hold numerous tidal estuaries that are home to hard fighting garrick and feisty shad, as well as grunter, kob and mullet in certain estuaries—all of which are popular with fly fishermen. These estuaries are ideal for novice anglers as well as the more experienced fly angler, and certain estuaries can produce really large fish. All the rivers that are open to the sea are tide dependant, and fishing the deeper drop offs and sand bars just inside the mouths of these estuaries on a pushing tide is productive for most species.

Most of the fishing is done on foot, wading the edges of the sand banks, but some estuaries such as Hermanus Lagoon and the large Breede River mouth can be more effectively fished with a boat—even if it is just used to transport you to the productive areas where you can then fish on foot.

The spring, summer and early autumn months (October to May) are best for most of these species, with the larger fish generally being caught later in the season.

Right in the heart of suburban Cape Town, the residential development of Marina Da Gama is built right on a semi tidal expanse of water known as Sandvlei. In these almost brackish waters, a significant number of garrick thrive in the warm, nutrient rich water, feeding on the large population of baitfish that shelter here. Surprisingly large specimens have been taken here in the past, with a fish of over 20kg being landed on fly earlier this year. When the dreaded southeasterly wind is not whipping across the water, Sandvlei can be a really fun place to make a few casts after work or on the weekend—and you still have the chance of hooking into a trophy fish.

A number of other shore based opportunities exist for saltwater fly fishers in and around the Western Cape, on both the south and west coasts, and with a bit of exploring and imagination, some truly remarkable fly fishing can be enjoyed. So on that next trip to the mother city when you have exhausted the usual tourist activities, haul out that travel rod, head out and experience a little more of what this fantastic part of the country has to offer.

For information, guided fresh and saltwater fly fishing, fly fishing clinics or corporate fly fishing events, contact Upstream Africa in Cape Town on  
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