



Jim

Gone Fishing in Tuscany

Pesca a mosca or fly-fishing



Me

I have lived close to the River Thames in several locations all my life but have never 'gone fishing' except if one counts catching minnows and sticklebacks with a net as a boy and taking them home in a jam-jar. So, when my new Scottish pal Jim suggested we go fishing in the high waters of the Tevere near Anghiari and San Sepolcro in Tuscany I thought I should give it a go! I soon discovered that for me this is the fishing equivalent of learning to play golf with borrowed clubs starting on the Masters' Course in Augusta, Georgia.

This area of the Tevere, the same river also known as the Tiber that eventually flows through Rome, is considered one of the finest spots to fly-fish for brown trout and attracts many expert fly-fishermen and women from all over the world. I was in good company with Jim who has fished for over sixty years man and boy and whose enthusiasm for fly-fishing has not diminished. Generously, he lent me all the necessary equipment, including warm socks and waders that made me look the part, but I was clearly an absolute beginner.

On Day One we met Luca Castellani, a fishing guide from Perugia who just happens to be known throughout Italy as a national champion and expert in this area, as several YouTube videos testify. He was in fact guiding for four days Chas from Montana, USA, who is himself a fly-fishing guide back in the States. I was indeed in exalted company!

Walking clumsily in waders into mid-stream over slippery rocks and small boulders and trying not to fall in, I watched and studied Jim in action. I was impressed by the way he approached the task; first standing quietly and calmly observing the water, looking at the faster flowing water then at the quieter pools that were a little deeper, watching for 'rising' fish, and studying the insect life that hovered above and gently on the surface of the water. By observing with great knowledge the type of flying insects that the trout might be

tempted to rise to the surface and take as food, Jim selected his 'fly' that he thought might work.

Soon it was my turn and Jim meticulously tied a suitable fly to the end of the very light-weight rod that contained the fly-line that is attached to the leader that in turn is attached to the finest thread. The simple objective was to cast in a rhythmic relaxed way back and forth, to gently land the fly in the exact spot where knowledge, intuition and a sixth-sense tell you where you think the fish will be. I soon discovered the amount of skill required to physically perform this 'simple' task.

If the fish are not interested, then, Jim said, pick a different spot and use a different fly, such as a sedge or olive, which are types of insects found on the river. In this spot, one fishes under strict licence, using barbless hooks. The fish are to be immediately returned to the river using wet hands so as not to harm them once caught. For me catching a fish proved difficult; although I had several bites I was too slow to strike and as the old cliché says, all mine 'got away'.

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It was over a *pranzo di lavoro*, our fishermen's working lunch in a local restaurant, that the experts concluded the fishing would be challenging because it was early in the season, the water was a couple of degrees cooler, and the insects in their life-cycle, from larvae or nymphs under the water, were not hatching into the adult flies in large numbers. This proved some consolation.

Day Two proved equally challenging and interesting in equal measure, and my not landing a single trout didn't deter my enthusiasm since the greater joy was to absorb the peace and quiet, the beauty of the surroundings, the bird-song, Jim's company and the novelty of the total experience.

At the end of the trip Jim said kindly that I had the makings of a fisherman and gained a fly for my cap, and he appreciated I had the qualities of patience, calmness and perseverance needed for the noble art of fly-fishing. He has already suggested another trip in the autumn.

– by Geoff Pavitt

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