



DESTINATION

WINEFRED LAKE

▲ COOPER TIRE'S ROY ARMES (LEFT) AND ANGELO VIOLA WITH A GIANT WINEFRED PIKE

HITTING THE WATER WITH TV'S FISH'N CANADA SHOW

BY PETE BOWMAN & ANGELO VIOLA

THE PROVINCE OF Alberta continues to surprise us with fishing opportunities that we would have never guessed existed. This is especially the case with northern pike and walleye—we figured Canada's only combination pike and walleye hot spots were farther north or more to the east. But we've discovered yet another Alberta fishery that has blown our minds on two different visits: Winefred Lake.

Lying east off Highway 881 between Lac la Biche and Fort McMurray, Winefred is nestled in the heart of Alberta's boreal forest. The lake is 36 kilometres long and 23 kilometres wide, and for the most part, it's round in shape. Although Winefred is a well-known walleye lake, it's the pike that have impressed us most. Across two trips, we've hooked, lost, broke off and seen enough big northerns to equal the action at almost any lodge in the remote north—and this when it's a drive-to lake!

Our accommodations were at Winefred Lake Lodge, which has been ranked as a five-star establishment. We agree: the food and lodging there are excellent. And so is the fishing, of course.

We've covered quite a bit of the lake during our two visits, catching fish almost everywhere. But for us, two areas in particular held the biggest and most fish. The first hot spot was a large hump in the main lake directly in front of the lodge, and the second was a massive weed flat off Eagle Point. Both were loaded with big pike, and the definite key was the weeds. Find the weeds and you'll find the fish.

By throwing either five-inch shiny silver spoons or five- or six-inch swimbaits, we caught pike after pike after pike. On our second trip, we had some guests from Cooper Tire along for the TV shoot. They repeatedly cast their treblehooked spoons into the weedbeds, let them get fouled up, then jerk them somewhat clean, triggering the big pike to pounce. That's a technique that, quite honestly, we wouldn't have tried. Well done, guys!

If you're looking for a western pike lake with a fantastic walleye fishery as a bonus, you must check out Winefred. 

GETAWAYS



MUSKOKA

Less than a three-hour drive from Toronto, the Limberlost Forest and Wildlife Reserve in beautiful Muskoka boasts

20 pristine lakes and 70 kilometres of hiking trails on 10,000 wooded acres. The high elevation ensures excellent water quality and outstanding fishing for trout and bass. Accommodations vary, from rustic cabins on remote lakes to lakeside cottages and lodges. (705) 635-1584; www.limberlostforest.com

—ALAN DAVY



GODS RIVER

Did you know you can fish for trophy brook trout in Manitoba? I certainly didn't, until a July visit to this wild river just south of the 55th parallel, where I caught three 20-inch brookies in one day. The river is reached via Elk Island Lodge on Gods Lake, which itself boasts 40-pound lakers and 40-inch pike. 1-888-559-6633; www.godslake.ca

—SCOTT GARDNER



LA RÉSERVE BEAUCHÊNE

Tucked into the high, forested hills of Quebec near Témiscaming, this private, 206-square-kilometre territory offers world-renowned fishing for smallmouth bass and brook trout, along with opportunities for lakers, pike, splake, walleye and whitefish in some 40 lakes. Accommodations range from outpost cabins to the main lodge and neighbouring luxury chalets. 1-888-627-3865; www.beauchene.com

—PATRICK WALSH



LEARN MORE ABOUT WINEFRED'S FISHING AND ACCOMMODATIONS AT WWW.WINEFREDLAKELODGE.COM. CONTACT FISH'N CANADA'S FAVOURITE ALBERTA FISHING GUIDE AT WWW.REELANGLING.COM. AND FOR A COMPLETE GUIDE TO FISH'N CANADA EPISODES, TV CHANNELS AND SHOW TIMES, GO TO WWW.FISHNCANADA.COM OR WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/FISHNCANADA.



PETE BOWMAN (WINEFRED LAKE); ALAN DAVY (MUSKOKA); SCOTT GARDNER (GODS RIVER); PATRICK WALSH (LA RÉSERVE BEAUCHÊNE)