

Northern Pike Fishing in Canada's Northwest Territories

Lac La Martre adventures provide kicks in the land of big fish and little sticks

by John Cleveland

It is 5:30 a.m., and I am sipping a hot cup of Columbian coffee while standing on the boardwalk in front of the lodge, gazing at the expansive body of wild water in front of me. The morning haze from the cool water rolls across the lake's surface. The fog mixes with the tendrils of steam from my coffee mug as I anticipate the daily adventures that I know are about to unfold this week. I had been dreaming for years about taking my oldest son Dave on his first remote, Canadian fishing adventure—and it was now a reality. The anticipation of sharing a special portal of wonderment that engages the soul when surrounded in the magic of the earth's rhythm has charged my imagination with its voice. This is a journal entry I made on my second morning at Lac La Martre Adventures in the Northwest Territories.

As marketing director for Eppinger Manufacturing Company, makers of the world-famous Dardevle line of spoons, I am always on the lookout for a new theater of adventure to explore. The Taiga (land of little sticks) has always fascinated me with its dramatic landscape sculpted by billions of pounds of ice shearing the earth's surface. The mountains of ice leave behind a barren rocky landscape with thousands of pristine lakes containing huge fish! Lac La Martre Adventures is located in the heart of the Taiga about an hour's float plane ride from Yellowknife in the Northwest Territories. The surface area of the lake is 1,000 square-miles encompassing endless shorelines. They contain excellent fish habitats of scalloped bays holding large pike and deep holes full of cold glacial water that are perfect for big lake trout.

As we flew over the lake on our approach to the lodge, the water looked like the turquoise blue waters of the Florida Keys dotted with small islands and scalloped bays stretching to the horizon. The float plane arrived at the dock at noon with owner Greg Dussome and his staff waiting to greet us and ready to help get our gear stowed in our cabins. A delicious lunch buffet was waiting for us before we headed out for the afternoon to fish. As we left the dock, our boat slipped across the lake's surface, ghosting through the enshrouding haze from nearby forest fires.



Dave Cleveland with a beautiful 45-inch trophy pike that was lured by an Eppinger Five of Diamonds spoon.

The haze had settled on the surface of the lake like a curtain about to open to an adventure of a lifetime for my son and me.

Instincts of a seasoned hunter

Our first afternoon on the lake was a non-stop wrestling match with pike. It seemed they were just about everywhere we threw our spoons. I soon discovered this was no accident. It quickly became evident that our guide Zack Brown was one of the more remarkable guides I have had the pleasure of fishing with in the Northwest Territories. He is in his early 20s but has the instincts of a seasoned hunter of big fish and had a calm, confident demeanor as he guided us to some incredibly good fishing. He knew the water and he knew the fish. He also knew how to get them in the boat! Each

morning, we would set up a game plan based on the weather conditions and our preference for species of fish. He never missed a beat and kept us on fish all week.

We spent the next six days catching hundreds of pike in water that was so clear we were able to sight fish in many of the bays. We had opportunities to stalk at least a half dozen really big pike between 45 and 50 inches. What a thrill to stalk big fish in clear, skinny water as they lay motionless on the bottom of the bay waiting to ambush their next meal. Lac La Martre has an abundant population of respectable 10- to 15-pound pike that kept us entertained daily. Sometimes a larger trophy would smash one of our spoons or the big pike streamer flies I was throwing in their general direction.



Sight fishing for huge pike in the crystal clear waters of Lac La Martre.

A dark bay and an aquarium

The circumference of the large, dark-water bay was painted with reddish brown blocks of dark peat, thin arctic spruce and large rocks laced with veins of orange and yellow-green moss. I watched as my son's Five of Diamonds spoon splashed into the middle of the bay and the water erupted like an exploding volcano under his spoon. A huge pike had blown up on it the instant it hit the water and was now busy plowing through the bays weed beds like a bulldozer while shaking its massive head as only a big angry pike can while trying to jerk the rod out of Dave's hands. After an epic battle that included the pike skating across the surface of the bay like a surfboard with jaws, Dave skillfully brought a beautiful 45-inch pike to the cradle. This was the largest fish Dave had ever caught and an absolutely beautiful trophy of a lifetime. As his dad, I felt so lucky and proud to share the experience with him.

The next day, Zack took us to a remote bay surrounded by rocky eskers akin to gatekeepers protecting its pristine emerald treasure. The water was so clear it looked like we were viewing a well-kept aquarium and could see pike cruising through the water like big alligator guppies on the prowl. We spent the next several hours battling these aggressive pike while they smashed our spoons and flies like hungry piranha. Three or four pike would chase our lures on every cast. We would jerk the lures away from smaller pike and recast to a larger fish.

After a couple of hours of hauling in too many pike to count, Zack spotted a

Book your dream adventure today!

Lac La Martre Adventures – Where dreams are made and records broken

Give us a call for the trip of a lifetime:

Greg Dussome
1-877-335-8855
Email: sherrid@telus.net

Dave Thompson
1-810-334-9381
gobluedave@comcast.net
www.nwtfishing.com

A photograph of Dave Thompson, a man with a white beard and sunglasses, wearing a baseball cap and a green jacket. He is holding a large pike fish that is nearly as long as he is tall. The fish has a mottled pattern of brown and white scales. The background shows a calm lake with evergreen trees under a clear blue sky.

Lac La Martre ADVENTURES



Cleveland and his son enjoy shore lunch on a beautifully pristine scalloped bay.

huge pike slowly cruising past our boat and helped spot my cast to her using my fly rod. As the fly took a serpentine path past, she made a lightning fast lunge and crushed my fly with her jaws and took off like a fishtailing semi-truck tearing through the weed beds. She put up a spectacular fight and took me into my backing before I was able to get control and slowly work her to the cradle. At 46 inches, the pike was a beautiful creature and a personal best for me on a fly rod. It was later to be officially certified as a catch and release line class world record on a fly rod!

At noon, we took a break from the action and enjoyed a delicious shore lunch in a trapper’s cabin surrounded by a field of blazing cerise fireweed that glowed in the high arctic sun. After lunch, we trolled for lake trout in a nearby bay and landed a well-fed, 21-pound trout and six others that ranged from 14 to 19 pounds. The entire time, the three eaglets perched on their towering nest observed us as we fished in front of their home.

On the rocks

Zack was a connoisseur of cooking on the rocks quite literally. He would start by choosing a location that had not been used before, typically a rocky, scalloped peninsula with a favorable breeze to keep the bugs at bay. While Zack would be filleting the fish, Dave and I would get the fire started. Even in wet weather, a cluster of Old Man’s Beard Lichen would get the fire going in a flash, and Zack would have lunch at full sizzle within minutes of our arrival. I enjoyed introducing my son to his first shore lunch. Dave was in sensory overdrive as he munched on some of the tastiest pike fillets on the planet while sitting on a rocky shoreline in Mother Nature’s kitchen. It truly doesn’t get any better than this.

The fishing at Lac La Martre is simply remarkable and my son and I were not the only ones enjoying the exceptional fishing this week. Our new friends Vic and Sue Comerinsky caught 102 lake trout in one day, and father and son team Dick and David Crnkovich brought at least 10 trout to their boat between 20 and 30 pounds. I am pretty sure everyone fishing at the lodge that week booked a week for the following year, which is quite an endorsement for this spectacular fishery. Several of us also joined the 20/20 club by catching a pike and lake trout over 20 pounds pike during the week.



The turquoise blue waters of Lac La Martre.

Camp life

Owners Dave Thompson and Greg Dussome have made many improvements to the lodge that includes remodeling the cabins and adding private bathrooms to each cabin. The main lodge is a spacious and comfortable place to kick back and relax after dinner and partake in the customary swapping of cleverly embellished tales of the day’s adventures on the lake. Lac La Martre is a classic example of the quintessential Canadian fishing lodge at its best with great fishing, comfortable accommodations, and excellent home-style meals served up with sincere, unpretentious hospitality.

Pike gear

By the end of the week, we had dozens of Eppinger one-ounce Dardevle spoons that were savagely mauled by the hundreds of pike we caught. My fly selection looked like it had been shredded in a meat grinder. I use med/heavy spinning or bait casting rods with 30-pound-test braided line and 12- to 18-inch 30-pound test steel leaders when fishing in the Northwest Territories. The three top patterns of the week were the classic five of diamonds, the pink with white diamonds and black with silver glitter. The number one performer was the yellow and red Eppinger five of diamonds. This pattern has inexplicable magic powers in the North. When fly fishing for large pike, a nine-weight or 10-weight rod is a good choice for controlling large fish and not having to play them to exhaustion for the sake of your ego by using lightweight tackle. Bunny leeches, large Clouser minnows, and Deceivers in black/red, black, white, purple, yellow/red and chartreuse are excellent choices for large predatory pike in the Far North.

This has been an epic trip of sharing the magic of this remote Northwest



Dave Cleveland with a big laker from Eagle’s Nest Bay.


Territories wilderness paradise. We smelled the wildness of the wind, felt the chilled spray of arctic waters in our faces, and had the opportunity to see and play with some of Mother Nature’s most beautiful creatures. These are the memories that I now share with my son.

MWO

John Cleveland is the marketing director of Eppinger Mfg. Co., makers of the world famous Dardevle line of spoons.

For more information...

- Eppinger
Email: Dardevle1@aol.com
Website: eppinger.net
- Lac La Martre Adventures
Website: nwtfishing.com
- Greg Dussome
Phone: 877-335-8855
Email: sherrid@telus.net
- Dave Thompson
Phone: 810-334-9381
Email: gobluedave@comcast.net



The Original Rex Spoon

by **Eppinger**


The *Spin N Rex* and *Classic Rex* spoons are a favorite of freshwater anglers seeking Pike and Bass in heavy cover such as thick weedbeds and difficult to reach shallow water structure. The Rex has the ability to get to where the fish are and entice them to strike like no other lure on the market!

Eppinger makes the Rex Spoon from the same high quality materials that have made the Dardevle a worldwide performance standard for over 100 years. The Rex Spoon’s unique darting action and ultra flash consistently trigger aggressive strikes in game fish.

Rex Spoons are available in the following five finishes: Nickel, Gold, Copper, Black, Crackle Frog

Skirts colors available: Chartreuse, White, Black/Blue, Chartreuse/White, Chartreuse/Black

Please see your local dealer or visit our website www.eppinger.net
Toll free number: 888-771-8277



*All Eppinger lures are made with pride in the United States of America