



# Raspberry Island: Remote Lodge Luxury

*An Account of the Good Life  
in the Alaskan Experience*

By Bernard R. Rosenberg

No doubt I am like many of you tempted by Alaska. The state holds wonderful adventures and the opportunities to participate in them are vast. You do your homework, and you make decisions on what to do based on the criteria of your own personal needs. Some trips are repeats, and some trips are brand new. Whatever it is, you plan for it and then you ultimately do it. This is my account of participating in such an experience. In July of 2008, I scheduled myself to spend five nights and six days at Raspberry Island Remote Lodge, a full service luxury lodge that is located on Raspberry Island, just a short distance from Kodiak, Alaska.

Let me level with you. Though I am experienced in traveling and fishing Alaska, I had never done it in a pampered setting. All my prior experiences were either self-guided fishing along the road systems or guided experiences via outfitters to charters at sea, remote camping drop-offs, or all terrain adventures. I have 20 years worth of these memories under my belt and I've been pretty seasoned. Luxury accommodations were always available, but circumstances simply prevented me from taking advantage of them. By the time I reached the decision to go it in style, my choice to go with Raspberry Island Remote Lodge was pretty easy to make. I had seen their property before during a charter fishery and had actually passed by it. I had always remembered its unique setting, and it beckoned me. With its close proximity to the amenities of Kodiak, I finally convinced myself to go. It was a choice that is well worth remembering.

## PRE-PLANNING

The key to any successful journey to Alaska is in the plan, and the owners of Raspberry have it down to a science by providing you with a quality website. Punch up [www.raspberryisland.com](http://www.raspberryisland.com) and you are there. There are eight links on the site, and as you navigate your way through it, you will find information that covers everything relative to your stay. Just about every aspect of the lodge is described and the opportunities that lay ahead for you are simply a click away. Be it fishing by boat, fishing by stream, kayaking, hiking, photographic odyssey, or even a custom arranged fly-out to view bears, it's all



*Raspberry Island Remote Lodge has its very own hillside setting and beach. Even from afar, it beckons the visitor with charm and warmth.*



out of Kodiak. Most clients usually will have to spend the night in town prior to the lodge stay, and communication is always important. Nor do you have to worry about any medical emergency while staying at Raspberry.

The largest Coast Guard base in the world is in the community of Kodiak. If circumstance should ever call for it, transportation via helicopter is available and medical attention is almost immediate. It is little wonder, therefore, that your decision to stay at Raspberry should give you peace of mind. Its location is very comforting.

*Personalized service begins the moment you arrive. Host Tiffany Robbins is always there to assist guests with the movement of their personal property.*



there. Your only responsibility is to figure out what you wish to do, and then commit to it. All arrangements are then undertaken by the lodge, and that certainly is well done by your hosts, Birch and Tiffany Robbins.

Birch and Tiffany are second generation owners. Their parents actually carved this property out of the wilderness over two decades ago and now the

son and daughter operate it complimented by their two adorable children. Their mother, Cilla, still remains on the property and is a seasoned woman who actually brought Raspberry to life. All of this makes for a family affair during your time there. You actually dine with them every evening. Their smiles are so genuine, and their laughter so hearty, that you will fit in almost immediately. Warmth and care exudes from these people.

Follow the preliminary advice that the site provides relative to your apparel and equipment. If you have personal questions, never be afraid to ask via electronic mail. They are very responsible in this area. Make sure Birch has your cell phone number or your in-town location phone number to reach you while you are connecting

Raspberry offers a distinct advantage over similar properties in that getting there and getting back are available in two fashions. You can either boat in or fly in, and so you are not really weather dependent. If the fog's in and planes can't fly, you won't have to worry. Birch can reach you in Kodiak via his 37' custom built catamaran, and that's a terrific ace in the hole. In fact, that is how I found myself reaching the lodge that very first day. The weather was chancy, and it was his decision to bring us all in by boat. It was a good choice.



*Sometimes visitors are brought into Raspberry by boat from the town of Kodiak. Host Birch Robbins will provide a good orientation while at the helm and on the way in.*

## SETTING

To be quite honest, there is an adept word to describe this location, and that word is *stellar*. You are some 20 miles away from any community and in your own private surroundings. There are few neighboring properties and everything is constructed for a specific purpose. Raspberry Island Remote Lodge is centered around a main lodge that is complemented by well designed guest cabins. Adjacent to the cabin areas are shower facilities in support of them. Along the paths to the cabins are laundry facilities, an outdoor hot tub, a cedar lined sauna, and a spectacular



*The original lodge is the main setting in this property. It houses the central dining area, great room, and even a gift shop. All of the views from these windows overlook spectacular settings of beach, harbor, and mountains.*

fire pit. This is all done in the heart of nature whose background hills tower with majestic spruce, and whose paths wind their way through preserved green belt areas of natural foliage.

Beyond the major paths are some less traveled, and be sure to ask Birch, Tiffany, or Cilla to show you the way. There are greenhouses, a small lumber mill, a smokehouse, and even a modern hydro-electric plant that you absolutely must see. If you ever wondered what a self-sustaining luxury environment In Alaska was all about, this has got to be the place!

The greatest treat is winding your way down those paths that ultimately drop you down to the private beach. All daily activities emanate

to and from that setting and the owners haven't missed a trick. The last path is lined with horn and whalebone, and it winds its way to a deck and storage facility in support of all adventures. If that wasn't enough, add in a private tap that is cooled by a tiny stream for your favorite flavor of beer. You'll pass it up in the morning, but chances are you will welcome it at the end of your day.

The beach is absolutely private, and aside from the guests and the family, is shared only by what nature invites to it. The ravens are there, along with the eagles, and you can count on seeing them almost every day. A bear certainly is less opportunistic in sighting, but every once in a while one finds the way. Add in a placid channel, and beyond it toss in the drama of mountains



*The outside garden areas that compliment your stay are well planned and maintained. Be sure to take the time to explore these unique ecosystems designed by the owners.*

that plunge right into the water. About the only thing that's missing is the white puff of the clouds, and even then some of them will ring their way down to the pinnacles of where you are. This is the setting in which you will temporarily reside, and that is why the word stellar is so deserving of it.

## AMENITIES

This is where Raspberry truly shines and that glow is destined to envelop you. Every cabin is appointed with immediate comforts. Linens are fresh, blankets are ample, and pillows are perfect. Electrical power runs 24/7 and there is even a half bathroom for your immediate needs. Every cabin has its own private entrance way with a moderate porch. They are fully carpeted and heated, and have plenty of hanging and storage space. There's even an ongoing cabin journal to record your thoughts or to read others who were there before you. In terms of cleanliness, they are immaculate.



*An array of guest cabins will await you further up the hill behind the main lodge. Indigenous plants like these Cow Parsnips (pushki) have been left in their natural setting along the paths that will lead to where you will stay.*

Your shower facility will be directly nearby, and it simply compliments where you reside. Water is hot, and there is plenty of it. Bath linens are fresh and changed every day. Even though I hung my towel to reuse it after each morning wake-up, by the time I returned in the late afternoon it had been washed, folded, and was waiting renewed.

The hot tub invites any who asks, and if you want it up and running it is full sized and jet perfect. So is the cedar sauna to rest and sweat away your weary bones after a day of Alaskan adventure. All of this is just a prelude to the main lodge, and once you step inside it you will come to an understanding of what going remote and doing it style is all about.

There are over twenty years worth of pampered guest

experiences that await you there, and it clearly shows. The kitchen is massive and friendly. The dining area is solid hardwood with grand tables and calling armchairs. The main living room is soft in upholstered comfort. The views are absolutely stunning, and they range from the inside appointments of art, photography, taxidermy, and artifacts, to the outside views of wild Alaska and the adventure of what lies ahead. If you are a fly fisherman, the tying bench is yours. If you are a reader, the comprehensive library is yours. If you are a shopper, the adjacent gift shop is yours. Everything is yours including an electronic touch; if you need the Internet even it's available.

Walk outside and enjoy the upper deck that looks across the channel to two thousand feet of mountains. Wander a path and discover the shooter's bench that's been left behind to hone your skills. Pluck a flower from the many gardens and pin it on your lapel. You're in Alaska and you're doing it in style! The owners have missed nothing in designing for your memory of a lifetime. Pulling out a word to describe these amenities is easy; it's called *exceptional*.



*The deck that leads to the beach becomes an inviting place to share the tales of the day after each adventure. The beach itself always reflects tidal changes and is worth your time for an interesting stroll.*



## SERVICE

They don't let up at Raspberry and you will note this from the moment you arrive and up until your final departure



*It's all about family, and at Raspberry you are a part of it. The evening meals are always delightful, shared with your hosts and new friends at the lodge. You can count on the meals being spectacular with good food and plenty of ambiance.*

day. When you come the family is there to greet you, almost all of them with smiles and waves, and they will transport your personal gear and luggage to your cabin and you won't even have to handle it. As you go through your daily activities, they are on the beach to see you off, and then they return to it to welcome you back every afternoon.



*Fine details, such as ordering your lunch and then enjoying it the next day become part of the lodge experience. This is the type of attentiveness you can expect at this location.*

Many persons rest on the lower beach deck after a day of adventure, and you count on Birch to put on an amazing display of carving mastery as he fillets out the catch of the day. Every portion will be cut to your desire, and then each one will be labeled and vacuumed processed to go into the freezer and await your final day. Even when you walk the path back to the main lodge you're going to be impressed, because the outside fire pit is already sparked and the outside speakers are in melody to welcome you home.

Want lunch? They will pack it for you including your favorite beverage. Need to do laundry? It's available. Need any extra gear? There is a beach house full of it. Everything is for you and most times you won't even have to ask. Twenty years of caring for clients clearly shows at Raspberry and that simply compliments your decision in going there.



## CUISINE

That's an excellent word to describe excellent food and that's exactly what you are going to get. As you plan your trip, you will find that this lodge will furnish your favorite beer or wine simply on your call ahead of time. When you arrive, there it will be waiting for you and it's available for your entire stay. You'll find the coffee freshly brewed every morning, and if you are an early riser, it's ready by six am.

Breakfast will delight you all the way from freshly baked bread to the aroma of sizzling bacon. The jams are homemade from blueberries and rhubarb, the pancakes are unique with the addition of wild rice, and the smoked

fish and bagels are simply gourmet.

Your packed lunch is prepared fresh each morning and they take your order the night before. All of this leads up to dinner or supper dependent on your origins, and it is the evening hour when the family puts on its greatest culinary show. Simply put, your hosts are excellent cooks.

Every evening you are treated to hors d' overbs prior to the evening meal. I sampled some fine cheeses, tasted some delectable sausages, and savored masterful smoked spreads. I also had some fine house wines. All of this was the prelude to winding up in those contoured wooden chairs and the massive dining table that I mentioned earlier, and what came to that table will certainly please any palate.

My evening presentations included homemade soups, fresh garden greens, home grown vegetables, and main course items that ran all the way from cedar smoked halibut and massive steaks, to poached salmon and Alaskan king crab. I come from a food service background and I recognize what quality in food is all about. Trust me, at Raspberry the cuisine is truly restaurant fare.

## ADVENTURES

During my stay I shadowed three brothers who return to Alaska every season simply to harvest fish. That meant that I had four full days fishing at sea under the expertise of Birch Robbins. He is a very capable skipper, and he knows his waters well. Believe me, we caught fish and plenty of them. His aluminum catamaran is quite powerful and very comfortable, and we spent hours of productive adventure on it.

Yet there is more to Raspberry than just fishing, and that is where Cilla comes into play. She is an excellent guide



*Assistance counts. In the event you are fishing and happen to hook the big one, you can count on your caring host and skipper to be there to ensure your success.*



*Raspberry Island Remote Lodge is located in areas of world class fishing. Catches such as the King Salmon (above) and the Yellow-Eyed Rock Fish (below) are common in these waters. If it is fish you're after, no location could be finer.*

and knows her surroundings. If you are a kayaker, she will lead your way to the whales and the otters and what lies in between. If you are a hiker she can lead you to the hidden valleys where you might come upon the elk. If you are a fly fisher she will take you to First Native streams that are laced with fish and seldom touched. Truly, this seasoned Alaskan Lady can guide you to the eco-adventure of your choice.



Yet be informed. Raspberry Island is located in a coastal marine environment and weather will dictate everything. Though I can guarantee that your remote lodge experience has all that I describe, I can never guarantee the weather. A kayak trip can be washed out by rough seas. A hike can be flooded by rain. Even a day of photographic odyssey can become clouded by the overcast of impending gray sky.

So, be flexible; have a Plan A and a Plan B just in case you have to use it. At the very worst, and if you are weathered



*Raspberry offers a lot more than just fish. Certainly you will want to bring your camera because the photographic opportunities are monumental. This visitor (left) is utilizing a telescopic lens to ensure missing nothing. The results of such plan-ahead thinking can result in a spectacular photograph like the Stellar Sea Lions on Seal Rock (above). Twenty years of development in this vacation offering is quite evident. The outdoor cooker (bottom left) is always crackling with a “welcome home” fire each afternoon as you return to the lodge. Since this property is located directly on the water, there are also opportunities for kayaking (bottom right). These images are the result of two generations worth of work via the Robbins family, and it awaits you from the moment you arrive until departure.*





*Packing up and going home is always an adventure. Guests can be assured that your hosts will provide you with all the necessary assistance for departure, including warm handshakes and final hugs.*



professional observations.

Respect the law. If you are a fisherman make sure you query Birch about all the rules and regulations regarding catch quota and technique. The world-class fishing in Alaska is regulated by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and Birch plays by the rules. Know full well what these rules are before you hit the seas so there will be no surprises or disappointments. If you are a fly fisherman and egress First Native streams, be prepared to pay the nominal fee that is required. I found it rather sad that one of the guests who paid to come so far would sell himself short and not pay to fish a stream of a lifetime. Don't let this happen to you.

Bring all your medications. I found myself caught short on this one and I suffered an eye infection and could not treat it because I had neglected to bring my medicine. Never venture anywhere in Alaska without your meds.

Don't mess with the menu. I brought rockfish back for dinner one afternoon and asked for its preparation simply because I wanted it cooked fresh. This was done by the graciousness of my hosts, but it was an imposition on them. I shouldn't have done this and neither should you. They are experts in food planning and preparation, so trust what they have in store for you. If you want the added flavor, carry it back home with you.



out, the main lodge has adventures already taken and you can read about them in the library. I did exactly that on a short browse and I can assure you that the tales are worth the read. There are journals in there that extend back during the years this property was developed and they are very interesting to read. It's almost like going back in time.

## ADVICE

As one who has been there before you, let me offer up these suggestions that might make your stay all the more enjoyable. There aren't many, but they are based on my



*All good things must come to an end, but be not dismayed. Even the flight back to Kodiak will leave you with memories of a well-made decision.*

Watch yourself in the kitchen. Your hosts get real busy during the morning and evening meal and you as a guest need to give them full room. If you want to observe what's going on, do it by seating yourself at the breakfast bar. You won't miss a thing, you will be completely out of the way, and they will absolutely adore you for respecting their space.

## SUMMARY

Just as your original host has spent over twenty years guiding guests to the Raspberry experience, so have I spent an equal amount of time guiding the





*Memories. It's all about the memories. There are plenty of them at Raspberry Island Remote Lodge and they all wait for your arrival. Halibut of this size are not unusual to catch at this luxury resort location.*

visitor to the opportunities of the Great Land. I've done it in so many ways and within so many budget parameters that I've written two books on the subject. Yet up until July of 2008 I had never experienced any adventure in total luxury. I had never gone remote in the manner I have shared with you, and my observations should now serve to assist anyone in planning a spectacular trip of a lifetime.

If you desire style, comfort, and adventure in a luxury setting, you will do no better than the commitment to Raspberry Island Remote Lodge. It's all part of the good life and we are only here one time. When and if your time comes, I certainly recommend Raspberry to be the place. My best wishes to any of you who make that exceptional choice!

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bernard Rosenberg has been researching and traveling to Alaska since 1988. He is a member of the Outdoor Writers Association of America and the Northwest Outdoor Writers Association. He is the author of two Alaskan fishing guide books; *Alaska Fishing on a Budget* and *Kodiak Fishing at Any Angle*. For more information please visit his website at [www.alaskanauthor.com](http://www.alaskanauthor.com).

