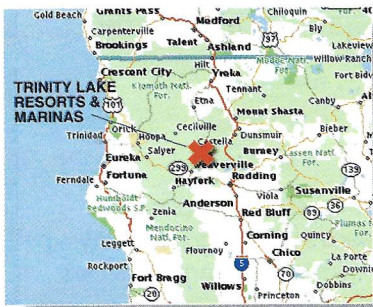


# CAMPING CHEAPLY

Small SUVs  
and lightweight  
trailers make for  
big-time fun

## EDITOR'S NOTE

Camping doesn't need to include all the luxuries of a large-class motorhome. As writer Mitchell Sam Rossi discovered recently on assignment for RV magazine, there is peace of mind to being on a tight budget. By the way, the Subaru Forster 2.5X manual transmission can be flat-towed.



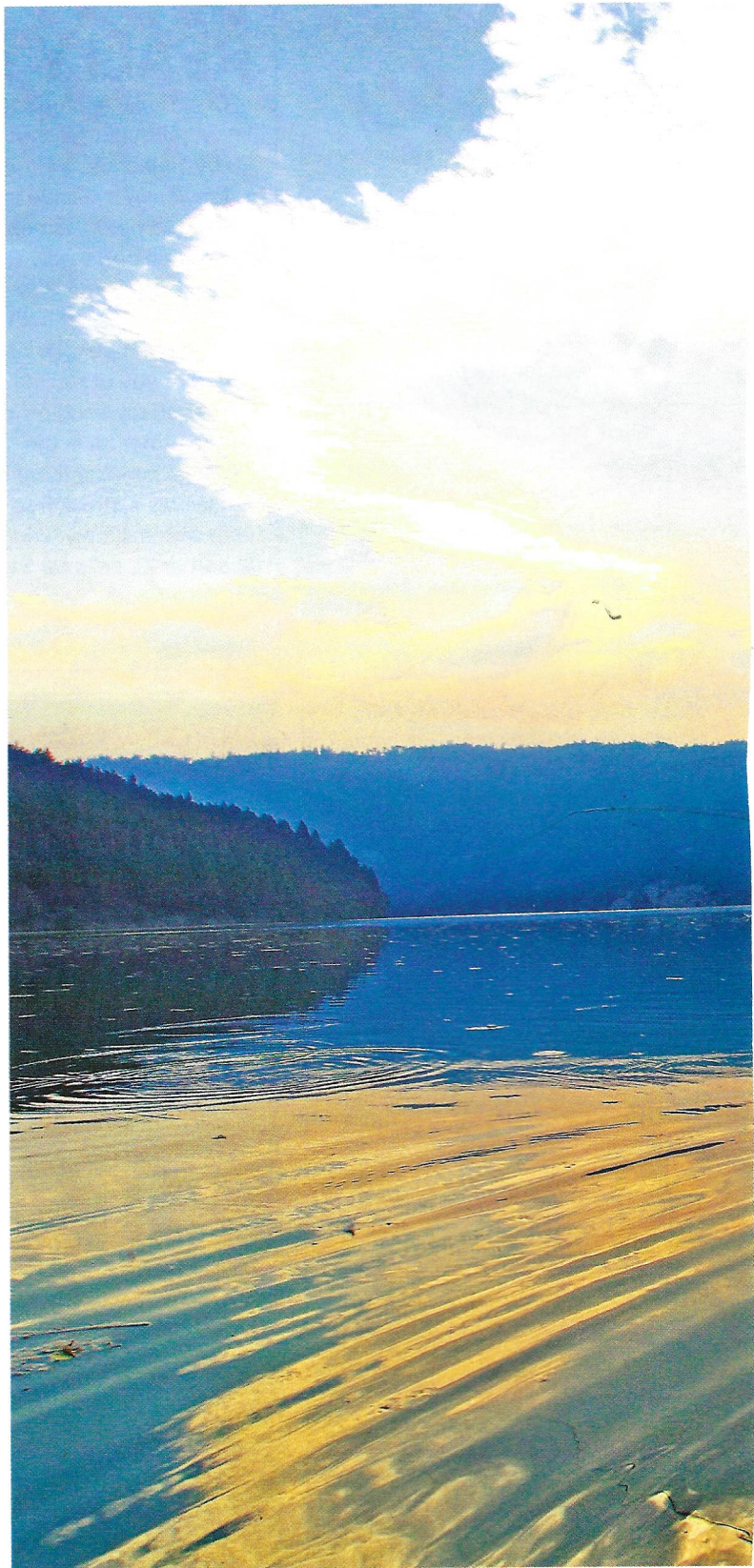
Map of our route into Trinity National Recreation Area.

I read Norman Maclean's 1976 novel *A River Runs Through It* years ago. At my wife's insistence, I even managed through Robert Redford's directorial vision of it. Until now, that was the extent of my interest in fly fishing.

In my defense, I admit to having a vague curiosity about them, those fly-fishing guys I'd seen standing stoically amidst the gently winding streams that ran below the mountain roads I drove. I'd catch glimpses of them with their legs crooked against the push of the current weaving spider webs above their felt hats. Their chests were always bloated by fishing vests of infinite pockets, each one busting with spools of line, tufts of cotton, floatant gels, and sectional boxes of exotic hooks.

It has always struck me as a complicated way to fish. All that equipment to shoulder, all those pockets to fill—and those feathered hooks. Their elaborate dressings delved into entomology (bug science), in which the ideal hook mimicked the coloration and habits of a particular insect, its subspecies, and all the variants along a specific stretch of river. Fly fishing seemed to take an extraordinary amount of effort to do what I could with a spinner reel and a carton of fresh nightcrawlers. So, you now understand that my participation in this ecclesiastical form of fishing was not by choice.

**Camping cheaply means to go as lean as possible. Our AdvancedFrame Convertible Kayak from Element Adventures was the perfect two-man inflatable. Deflated, it packed neatly inside the Forester, along with a pair of paddles, life vests, and a large-volume air pump. The retail price is \$659.**





Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation area was only an hour's drive from my brother-in-law's place. If you know where to look, you'll find some of the best fly fishing on the planet.

**SIMPLE PLANS**

It began innocently enough. I was set to drive the new '09 Forester 2.5X, Subaru's redesigned compact SUV, specifically the environmentally friendly, Partial Zero Emission Vehicle (PZEV) version. I had heard the canned spiels about the Forester: how it handled better than last year's model, how it was larger with a more luxurious interior, how it had more carrying capacity and road clearance. To me, that was the brochure-speak of dealership linesmen. To get a real sense of the Forester, I needed to climb behind the wheel, run it out, and shake it down.

Since Subaru continually boasts of its rugged full-time, all-wheel-drive system, I didn't want to waste time tooling around the city or running along the highway. There's little doubt the revamped SUV would excel under those circumstances. I wanted to see if this third-generation Forester lived up to its heritage or if all the refinements had downgraded the reputable runabout into a simple, high-riding station wagon. More importantly, given the state of the economy, I needed to go camping cheaply, and this was a good excuse to try something different.

**ROAD TRIPPING**

"Road trip" in my dictionary means a camping trip. With 33.5 square feet of cargo area, I was confident that my

**SUBARU FORESTER SPECS**

MODEL .....	2.5X AWD (PZEV)
BASE PRICE.....	\$22,695
SEATING.....	5
TRANSMISSION.....	FOUR-SPEED AUTOMATIC
ENGINE .....	FLAT-4 BOXER (HORIZONTALLY OPPOSED)
HORSEPOWER.....	175 @ 5,200 RPM
TORQUE (LB-FT) .....	170 @ 4,400 RPM
CURB WEIGHT (LB).....	3,440
FUEL TANK (GAL) .....	16.9
FUEL ECONOMY (MPG) .....	20 CITY, 26 HIGHWAY
CARGO VOLUME (CU.FT.) .....	33.5 (68.3 WITH REAR SEATS DOWN)

**JUMPING JACK SPECS**

BASE PRICE.....	\$4,995
LIVING AREA (SQ.FT.).....	96
ACCOMMODATIONS.....	6
SETUP TIME (MIN).....	UNDER 5

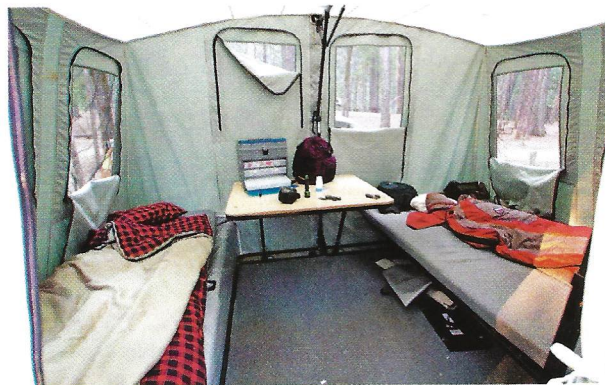
**NOTES:** Seven windows provide 360-degree views. Mildew- and water-resistant canvas. Powdercoated tent frame. Popup table. Sleeping pads. 3,500-pound torsion bar axles. 15-inch steel wheels. 1/8-inch wall rectangular tube frame construction. Powdercoat finish. Recessed lights.



Along with its cavernous interior, the seven large mosquito-meshed windows that surround the tent give it a spacious feel. In addition to two beds, the tent is equipped with a large popup table.

The setup time of the Jumping Jack trailer was less than five minutes. It's so convenient that you can move from site to site without much trouble.

With zero amenities, the Jumping Jack is for the true outdoorsman, those who need a rugged platform to transport their adventure gear off the trodden path and still take along a viable shelter. The manufacturer tells us that newer models will include more options.



### FINDING A HOME

Mentally I sorted through our payload and realized that the Forester's capacity was going to come up short. I contacted David Tenney, general manager of Manteca Trailer & Camper in Manteca, California. Having worked with his expansive dealership in the past, I knew that if anyone could help, it would be Tenney.

Manteca is one of the largest and best-supplied dealerships in California, carrying a wide range of Class A, B, and C vehicles along with a vast selection of camping and toy trailers. As I hoped, Tenney had a rig that would fit our needs. He suggested the Jump Up tent trailer from Jumping Jack Trailers, a small but rugged popup camping unit designed for the minimalist sportsmen. With a dry weight of only 1,245 pounds, the Jumping Jack could easily be handled by the Forester.

The lightweight tent trailer and Subaru's low-emission SUV made a good combination for both gas mileage and our environmental conscious. Picking up the Jumping Jack from the dealership had unanticipated benefit. While the Subaru was equipped with a tow hitch and a four-pin wiring harness, the trailer required a seven-bladed plug. Unfortunately, a simple 4-to-7 adapter was not the solution.

As Tenney explained, like most foreign-made vehicles, the Subaru has separate brake lights and turn signals and requires an MME unit to sync its electronics to that of the American-made trailer with combined brake lights and blinkers. Manteca's technicians took just two hours to install the unit and get me on my way.

### THE FORESTER

Before picking up the trailer, I had the chance to clock several miles on the small SUV and found that it performed above my expectations. The ride was smooth and quiet, revealing neither wind nor road noise. The Forester's 2.5L, four-cylinder boxer engine is rated at 175 hp at 6,000 rpm, with 170 lb-ft of torque at 4,400 rpm. While the car weighs in at 3,440 pounds, the power feels respectable, although the turbo-charged version certainly has more freeway-entry punch.

wife, our 7-year-old daughter, and a few bits of basic camping equipment would pack nicely behind the rear seats. For additional room, I could drop one side of the Forester's 60/40 split rear seat and pack the needed gear alongside my daughter. But what I really wanted was to take the Subaru farther afield, find a fire road to conquer or one of those forgotten trails carved into the High Sierras by wagon wheels during the Gold Rush.

My daughter would be up for it. My wife, probably not. She isn't opposed to camping as long as a certain level of civility is maintained: fresh water, flush toilets, GPS. The sort of things I consider limiting factors to a good old-fashioned camping adventure. I opted for Plan B. I called my brother-in-law.

### CAMPING TO FISH

Brian is a great brother-in-law, always up for a challenge, always willing to go along with my sometimes questionable plans. He doesn't worry about flush toilets or GPS. So I placed the call and made the offer. I had a new Forester, I told him. Let's go camping. He wasn't interested in just camping. He wanted to go fishing as well.

Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area was only an hour's drive from his place, and its lakes offered trout and bass fishing. Brian explained that below Lewiston Dam was a hatchery that raised and released trout fingerlings into the Trinity River. It was said to have some of the best fly fishing in the area.

It was one of those slap-the-forehead moments. Why hadn't I thought of fishing? It was the perfect complement to a camping trip. And I liked the idea of fishing near a hatchery; it increased my chances of success, although, in truth, it seemed like hunting at the zoo. But fly fishing? I shuddered at the thought of wading into chilly waters. Of course, I could not admit that to my brother-in-law. Instead, I responded with the idea of borrowing a boat for the lake.



The Forester 2.5X can also be flat-towed or dollyed behind your motorhome if you prefer to use it as a resort runabout.

### INSTANT VESSEL

For a long time I had my eye on the inflatable AdvancedFrame Convertible Kayak from Element Adventures. Designed with a rigid bow and stern frame, the kayak is extremely versatile. Its adjustable seating can accommodate either one or two kayakers. It can be used as an open kayak or, with its detachable decks, be paddled through rougher water. Even bearing a pair of oarsmen, there is plenty of room for fishing gear.

Luckily it only took a phone call and some pleading to borrow the craft. Still, I was hesitant to take an inflatable fishing. But Element Adventures' service manager, Ritchie Simpson, assured me that the kayak would hold up against our barbless trout hooks since its outer skin was rated at 600 denier. A denier is a unit of measure for the linear mass density of fibers—in layman's terms, 600 is pretty thick stuff.

I had hoped that the idea of casting from a kayak would deter Brian from further thoughts of fly fishing. Instead he added spinning reels and rods to our gear.

The PZEV model is equipped with an advanced emissions control system, giving the Forester a Super-Ultra Low Emission Vehicle (SULEV2) rating. This environmental benefit, however, adds \$200 to the price.

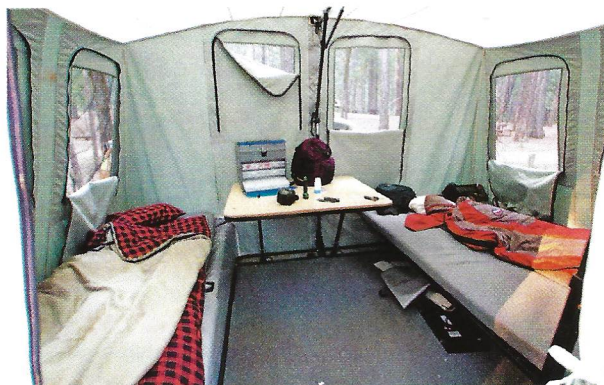




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The PZEV model is equipped with an advanced emissions control system, giving the Forester a Super-Ultra Low Emission Vehicle (SULEV2) rating. This environmental benefit, however, adds \$200 to the sticker price. Fuel economy is rated at 20 city, 26 highway, but I actually managed 29 mpg without the trailer.

The cockpit is laid out nicely. All buttons and knobs are within easy reach. The five-passenger interior feels significantly larger than a spec-by-spec comparison with its predecessor would suggest, especially in regard to the front seats and headroom. While the seats are well appointed, some of the other materials throughout the car are not on par with those of the Toyota RAV4 or Nissan Rogue, the Forester's direct competitors.

Once we latched the Jumping Jack to the hitch, I could feel its presence through the Forester's gas pedal. While adequate, the Forester struggled on some of the longer, steeper grades. I quickly became aware of both my merging and braking distances. The Forester's gas mileage dropped by nearly 30 percent, but 20 mpg with a trailer in tow is certainly nothing to be ashamed of.

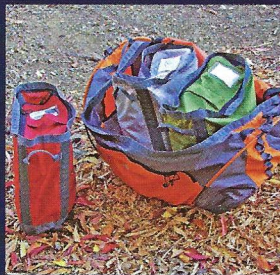
## GEARING UP

When I pulled in front of my brother-in-law's driveway, he was in the garage weaving line through his 9-foot spinner rod. At his feet were two carefully set rows of gear: one camping, one fishing. Our casual trip now included four rods, four reels, two tackle boxes, vests, waders, and fuzzy-soled boots. Already inside the Forester were the inflatable kayak, a pair of paddles, life vests, and a large-volume air pump. There was my camping gear: Big Agnes sleeping bag, ice chest, Atle BBQ stove by Primus, cooking utensils, hiking pack, and the like. I had also loaded in my Kelty collapsible kitchen table, a portable sink, and a pair of folding chairs.

Not only were we well prepared for a two-day fishing trip, but we were ready for the Normandy invasion.

Brian and I packed the Forester with the delicate fishing gear and relegated the hardier equipment to the top of the trailer. Based on a heavy-duty utility trailer, the Jumping Jack stores its canvas tent in a large, plastic-coated bag that fills every square inch of the steel mesh trailer box. Anything extra must be strapped to the deck, exposed to the elements and within reach of pilfering fingers.

To be fair, the trailer was not designed to carry small equipment, but rather to haul robust accessories. Hatches closed, the Jumping Jack's upper deck can shoulder such things as hard-shelled kayaks, mountain bikes, a pair of ATVs, and even one of those eight-wheeled utilitarian vehicles. We relegated the inflatable kayak, camping table, and ice chest to the top of the trailer and secured it with ratcheting straps.



The Kelty Bintto Hauler carries a remarkable 7,000 cubic inches of gear. The oversized outer bag utilizes stand-alone rods that hold the nylon bag open and upright. The three color-coded Bintto bags that slide into the main bag can be labeled individually. They, too, are self-standing and swallow a remarkable amount of stuff. Retail: \$89.95



When nature outfits your camp with little more than rocks and tree stumps for meal preparation, take along Kelty's folding Basecamp Kitchen. It offers a stove shelf with an attachable windshield, a zippered pantry, a towel holder, utensil hooks, and two additional food prep surfaces. Weighing less than 18 pounds and collapsing into a transport bag, it is perfect for the outdoorsman who prefers pitching his tent away from picnic-tabled campgrounds. Retail: \$159.95



Utilizing an integrated sleeve on the lower portion of the sleeping bag, Big Agnes bags are designed to keep you on the sleeping pad no matter how much you twist and turn. Offered in a variety of sizes and styles, the sleeping bags are made from 100-percent recycled materials. The retail for the Skinny Fish 20 as shown is \$179.95.



**THE JUMPING JACK**

We made Tannery Gulch campgrounds along the western shore of Trinity Lake by midday. Eager to cast our hooks, we immediately set to hoisting our quarters.

Opening the thick, weather-proof tent bag revealed a heavy eucalyptus-green canvas enclosure. Our initial impression was that we had brought little more than a tent on wheels, but as the Jumping Jack unfolded, it was clear a lot of field research and planning had gone into its design.

The hatch doors swing open over the trailer's wheels, becoming the support shelves for the tent beds. Once the canvas roof was unfolded, we had access to the inner frame through the zippered entry door. With a little guidance, the frame's integrated hydraulic dampening system then erected the shelter almost on its own.

Along with the tent's cavernous interior, the seven large mosquito-meshed windows add to its spacious feel. In addition to two beds, the tent is equipped with a large popup table. But that's it for appointments. The manufacturer's spec sheet says the Jumping Jack will sleep six adults, but they'd have to be a close group of friends. Four is more like it, and even then the arrangement would be cozy.

With zero amenities, this may not be the best camping tent for the family. Yet it is not intended to be. Its no-thrills function is for the true outdoorsman, for the guys (and gals) who need a rugged platform to transport their adventure gear off the trodden path and still take along a viable shelter.

One note: After unhitching the unit from the Forester I discovered it is critical to lower the rear stabilizing jack under the trailer's tailgate. Failing to do so allows the trailer to pivot on its 15-inch wheels and dump its occupant and content, tilt-bed-style, out the back door. Take my word for it, it happens quicker than you can imagine and can be very embarrassing in front of your brother-in-law.

**LOW WATER MARK**

With the camp set and the fishing gear sorted, we clambered into the Forester in search of that perfect

patch of Trinity shoreline. The weather was hot, nearing 90 degrees in the shade. And that's what I was after. A spot of shade from which I could toss my hook into the water, sit back on shore, and tilt my hat against the world.

Before trekking too far, Brian and I decided to have a look at the lake. Fishermen do that. They look at their fishing hole. I supposed it's akin to surfers checking out the shore break. It was well we did. We had been warned the lake was low, but we didn't expect to find 100-feet of dried, cinnamon-brown silt between the tree line and the water. Putting the Forester's all-wheel-drive to use, we drove off the edge of the cement boat ramp and onto the surreal landscape.

It was like driving into a huge, sandstone salad bowl.

Scattered across the naked band of iron-stained soil, we found hundreds of forgotten tree stumps undoubtedly cut before the rising waters swallowed them. With their massive roots exposed, they looked like hideous wooden creatures waiting for nightfall to scamper into the forest and disappear.

**LEWISTON LAKE**

We navigated the Forester out of the sand basin and onto Highway 3. Brian pointed me toward Lewiston Lake, a much smaller, coldwater reservoir squeezed between the Trinity and Lewiston dams. There is a 10-mph limit on Lewiston, thus watercraft consists mostly of trolling boats and pontoon fishermen.

We found a low patch of dusty gravel that stretched to the lake. At its edge, wild grass and reeds hung over Lewiston's calm waters like a green scruffy beard. We pulled in and emptied the Forester. Flopping open the kayak, Brian and

I took turns at the hand-pump until the bright orange craft was bulked up tight. We filled the kayak with our fishing gear and paddles and then slipped it into the water where the algae-coated bottom was flat and shallow. My brother-in-law climbed in first. I straddled the hull, dropped into the rear seat, and drew my wet feet inside. I pushed away from the shore.

As I paddled, Brian launched a spinning lure and trolled. Over the next few hours we swapped rod for paddle. We talked fishing, we talked family, and we talked in whispsers





# BOTTOM LINE

## SUBARU FORESTER 2.5X

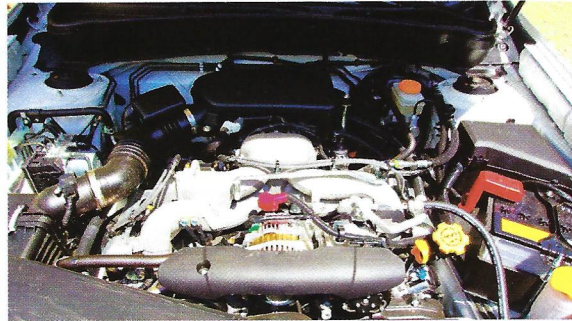
**LIKES:** This small SUV conquered any terrain we challenged it with. Two guys fishing don't need anything more than what the new Forester provides. Gas mileage was exceptional even with the trailer in tow. Interior was spacious, and I especially liked the oversized sunroof. Cruising through the forest, it was great to slide the top open. I was impressed that the PZEV model added 5 hp over the non-PZEV 2.5X model. We were also happy to discover that the normally aspirated Forester used regular 87-octane fuel, not the more expensive 91-octane required by the 2.5X turbo engine.

**DISLIKES:** The greatest disappointment was with some of the interior materials, such as the thin, foamy carpets (especially in the cargo compartment). While we were glad to have the low-emissions model, we look forward to testing the diesel version that will soon be introduced to the U.S. market. Better yet, we'd like to see a hybrid.

## JUMPING JACK TRAILER

**LIKES:** The Jumping Jack did what we expected with little fanfare. And the Subaru was the perfect tow rig for this tiny tent trailer. Assembly was simple. Although there are no bells or whistles aboard this model, it certainly fit our needs. It was also very affordable.

**DISLIKES:** The lack of securable storage space was a real disappointment. While the trailer rode well with our minuscule amount of gear, if you plan to transport your ATVs with it, definitely get the optional brake package.



because the stillness of Lewiston's chalkboard waters carried our voices across its length and breadth. Although dusk inspired a number of large browns to jump near our bow, we brought none into the boat and returned to camp empty handed. The warmth of the day lingered through the night, giving us more reason to appreciate the Jumping Jack's large mesh windows.

In the morning Brian made use of my new Atle BBQ stove from Primus. Its single burner was assigned water boiling duty for morning coffee, while its built-in grill made quick work of bacon and scrambled eggs.

### A RIVER RUNS THROUGH

I was looking forward to returning to Lewiston when I noticed Brian gathering the fly-fishing gear. "Time to try the river," he said. I smiled weakly. Directly below Lewiston Dam, the Trinity River teams with large Brown trout, elusive rainbows, and, during their fall run, hard-fighting steelhead. But before I committed to my borrowed Hodgman waders, I needed to take a look at the river. Check the surf, as it were. Regardless of my brother-in-law's assurances, I was not convinced I could swing a 9-foot rod over my head while standing in a freestone stream for hours.

Below the dam, we found a dirt road that zigzagged down to the river. At its end, a field of softball-sized stones continued to the riverbank. We eased the Forester onward as the big rocks rattled against each. From the water's

edge, Brian and I looked upriver where the sun illuminated the broad earthen dam. In the other direction, the dappled Trinity sliced through a canyon of tall evergreens and oak. For most of its visible length, the river kept its shores 50 feet apart. In its clarity we could see a checkerboard of sparkling shallows and dark pools.

A hundred yards away, two fly anglers had already lay claim to a pair of deep ponds. They were casting their lines with well-practiced ease.

### HEADING OUT

Looking for a last-minute reprieve, I turned to my brother-in-law to admit my reluctance, but Brian was already at the Forester climbing into his waders. Resigned to my fate, I donned the borrowed waders and a fishing vest that Brian had packed. Pulling a plastic box from one of the pockets, he showed me half a dozen flies to use if—or more likely when—I lost the Mayfly floater that hung from my rod.

I trailed Brian across the cobblestones and into the water. My brother-in-law downplayed his abilities with the rod, but four out of five of his casts dropped his fuzzy hook as gently as if it were a true insect falling from the sky. That, I was told, was the point: to simulate a local fly landing on the river's rippling waters. If the casting is done correctly, a hungry trout would see neither the line nor the fisherman and would be tricked into striking the counterfeit morsel.

**SOURCES**

**ADVANCED ELEMENTS**

kayak  
 (707) 745-9800  
[www.advancedelements.com](http://www.advancedelements.com)

**BIG AGNES**

sleeping bags  
 (877) 554-8975  
[www.bigagnes.com](http://www.bigagnes.com)

**JUMPING JACK TRAILERS**

(866) 461-7001  
[www.jumpingjacktrailers.com](http://www.jumpingjacktrailers.com)

**KELTY**

camping gear  
 (800) 423-2320  
[www.kelty.com](http://www.kelty.com)

**MANTECA TRAILER AND CAMPER INC.**

(209) 239-1267  
[www.mantecatrailer.com](http://www.mantecatrailer.com)

**SUBARU OF AMERICA**

[www.subaru.com](http://www.subaru.com)

**TANNERY GULCH CAMPGROUND**

Shasta-Trinity National Forests  
 Weaverville Ranger District  
 (530) 623-2121  
[www.campersonline.com](http://www.campersonline.com)

Fly fishing seemed to take great effort to accomplish what I could do with a spinner reel and a carton of fresh nightcrawlers.



**GOING FOR ACCURACY**

Unlike bait fishing, where shoulder and arm strength directly correlate with casting distance, fly fishing requires finesse, grace, and extraordinary timing. Patiently, Brian demonstrated the cast. He dropped his hook in the stream and let the current withdraw a few yards of delicate filament from his rod tip. In a straight, steady motion, he gently lifted the rod to his shoulder, following it with a backward snap. The line leaped from the water and arched over us. Then he waited. And waited some more. When he sensed that the whisper of line and weightless fly had extended itself fully, he pushed his arm forward and chased it with a crack of his wrist. The line fell gracefully across the dapples, the fly drifting onto the stream. "Go for accuracy, not distance," my brother-in-law said.

**TWO FISHERMEN WALK INTO A STREAM**

I did as he had done. Exactly as he instructed. Or at least that's what I thought until I saw my fly crash into

the water 10 feet in front of me followed by a tangled ball of line. "It just takes practice," Brian assured me as he moved upstream.

I invested 10 minutes trying to unravel my first cast, then another 10 searching my vest for its replacement. I stitched a new fly and tried again. The next hour showed little progress, though my tangles were less terminal.

With more suggestions from Brian, the second hour brought one decent cast out of every 10. Clearly, success in fly fishing is not measured in fish caught, but rather in the pleasure derived in mastering the delicate technique. I imagined it is similar to a surfer's first perfect ride through the tube. It immediately necessitates another attempt, although the feat may take years to repeat.

Through hours two, three, and four I tuned my performance until I reached a three-out-of-10 rate of success. Needless to say, no fish was foolish enough to be tricked by my oddly acting flies. I could almost hear the angler jokes being passed from one trout to the other at my expense.

### THE NIBBLE

Upstream my brother-in-law was weaving his weightless line and lure through the air with the same beauty captured in Redford's lens. While watching Brian play his line, I realized that fly fishing was not an advanced sport, but an ancient one. Perhaps only underwater spear fishing comes this close to leveling the playing field between hunter and prey.

A few feet away I caught a glimpse of quicksilver breaking from the stream. Then a second fish cleared the ripples in an attempt to snag an airborne meal. I began casting in their direction. A few good casts landed where I had intended. Then suddenly, magically, I snagged my first trout.

The rod bowed from mid-length to tip. I pulled in the line as Brian had demonstrated, gripping it with my right forefinger, drawing it in with my left hand. The trout torpedoed back and forth under the swift waters. I drew him closer with each stretch of my arm.

When he was at my boot, near enough for me to mentally measure his length at 8 or so inches, he jerked his head up and to the left and vanished. Just like that, gone. But I had my perfect ride, my moment in the tube.

### ANGLER-SPEAK

Brian confessed he had gone without a hit during the first hours we stood in the Trinity's cool waters. By the end of the day, however, he had caught and released six rainbows, including a decent 14-incher.

On our drive home, with the Forester packed and the Jumping Jack trailing, Brian began planning our next fly fishing trip. He knew of better rivers and mountain streams, ones that were farther into the wilderness where the rainbows were wild and the browns fought harder. I said nothing. In the windshield I could see that 8-inch trout at my boot, disappearing as I reached for him.

Brian wondered if I could get the Forester and Jumping Jack again. The mini SUV had gone decisively wherever we asked. If Brian and I were going to head into the backcountry and wanted to do so with our environmental conscious clear, the PZEV model was the ideal vehicle. The Jumping Jack trailer had also proven itself. I had little doubt it could handle any off-pavement excursion the Forester could conquer and probably more.

If Brian was willing to assemble the fishing gear, the least I could do was make the phone calls and do some more pleading. This time around, I'd bring the flies. **RV**

