Smooth operators

Aleka A8 rods from £109.99

The A8s are Aleka's top of the range rods and they come in 11 weights from a 7ft 6in 3wt up to a 10ft 8wt and I had three to try out, the 9ft 5wt, 9ft 6in 7wt and the 10ft 8wt.

Aleka describe the rods as having a "progressive smooth-fast action" and after a preliminary play it seemed that most of the flex did come from the tip. So I was expecting good line lift, fast line speeds, tight loops and better than average distance - and I was not disappointed.

Trying the 9ft 5wt first, I found it had a much more middle to tip action than I was expecting. This didn't detract from its casting ability and in fact made it a more pleasurable experience. It is a dedicated 5wt but will handle a 4wt for those more capable casters. A great all round rod for small stillwaters and for targeting reservoir trout in the warmer months when weather conditions are more favourable.

I then switched over to the 10ft 8wt, and the two rods couldn't have been more different. The 8wt has a steely form and this was evident from the way it loaded and delivered line onto the water at distance. The casting stroke on the back and forward cast is quite short and the tip fires the line in incredibly tight loops cutting through the air and allowing you to target fish at all distances. For my style of casting I found a floating line with a long head length (50-60 feet) suited the rod perfectly and although definitely an 8wt rated rod it also handled a 7wt. Less experienced casters would do well to settle for a standard weight forward line with a 35-40 foot head length.

This rod, aimed at the reservoir boat and bank angler, is capable of handling any sinking density of line. I tried out intermediates right through to Di-8s and it handled them all with ease. Expect a bit of arm fatigue after a long day with this rod, especially if you are casting at distance and working with large flies and faster retrieves, but that's not the rod's fault, that's just fishing. For the offer price of £120 it represents excellent value. The rod performed well in every department and I would be more than happy using it on the bank or in the boat.

Finally, I tried the 9ft 6in 7wt, a favourite length and weight of the reservoir bank angler. It took a little bit of getting used to casting with this lighter model after using the 10ft 8wt but again I found it was very much a tip action although kinder on the shoulder muscles and it didn't need quite as much of a follow through. So I was able to adopt a more relaxed casting style. Great for overhead casting and double hauling and there's still enough feel within the blank to easily perform continuous motion casts such as the roll and switch making it very versatile.

If I had to pick one of these three rods as my favourite it would be the 10ft 8wt. It suits my fishing style down to the ground and is an absolute cracker of a rod.

Web: www.alekasports.com

The A8 9ft 5wt has a half wells cork handle and anodised reel seat.

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TECH-SPEC

MODEL: ALEKA A8 9FT 5WT
- Price: £109.99 (on offer from £179.99)
- Weight: 83gr (2.9oz)
- Sections: 4
- Half wells cork handle
- Single ring uplocking bronze anodised alloy reel seat with a walnut wood insert
- Gloss metallic green blank with green whippings, gold highlights and section alignment markers
- Two aluminium oxide lined stripping guides, nine hard-chrome single leg snake intermediates, tip and keeper ring
- 31-inch green cordura zip-top tube with carry handle and separate cloth rod bag

MODEL: ALEKA A8 9FT 6IN 7WT
- Price: £114.99 (on offer from £184.99)
- Weight: 113gr (4oz)
- Sections: 4
- Full wells cork handle with a cork and composite fighting butt
- Double ring uplocking bronze anodised alloy reel seat with a walnut wood insert
- Gloss metallic green blank with green whippings, gold highlights and section alignment markers
- Two aluminium oxide lined stripping guides, nine hard-chrome single leg snake intermediates, tip and keeper ring
- 34.25-inch green cordura zip-top tube with carry handle and separate cloth rod bag