



Angling
Ireland

**SEA TROUT ANGLING
IN IRELAND**



INTRODUCTION

Sea trout are a migratory form of brown trout – they are one and the same species, but in many rivers some of the trout are genetically programmed to migrate to sea at 1-2 years of age, like salmon. Unlike salmon, they do not travel long distances in the ocean, but mostly feed along the coastline and estuaries. They can return to freshwater as young immature fish of 0.5-1 lb (.22 - .45 kg), or as mature adults of 1.5-3 lbs+ (.7 - 1.4 kg), and indeed can move in and out of freshwater seemingly at will. The genetic trait of marine migration appears to be linked to environmental conditions in the native river, and rivers with acidic geology that are low in nutrients with limited growth potential are more likely to have a sea trout population. Feeding in the sea is much richer, and trout that go to sea would have a competitive advantage over those that remain in freshwater in these catchments. The west coast of Ireland is dominated by acidic bedrock and peatland, and many rivers along this coastline produce sea trout. There are a number of rivers on the east coast which also contain sea trout. These Irish Sea-facing rivers tend to produce larger fish than the west coast, similar to rivers in Wales on the other side of the Irish Sea.

Irish sea trout are entirely wild and so present the angler with a real test of their skills. We do not stock our rivers and while this may make fishing a bit more challenging, there is nothing that compares to catching wild fish in a wild environment.

Sea trout can be caught in rivers, lakes (loughs), in estuaries and on the open coastline. Like salmon, sea trout tend to stop feeding when they return to freshwater, although they do sometimes return to a feeding mood, and also tend to take a fly more readily than salmon. Fly fishing, spinning and bait fishing are all good methods, and while many freshwater fisheries are fly fishing only, the other methods come into their own in the saltwater, where the fish are feeding more actively.

This brochure contains some basic information to help you get started on your Irish sea trout fishing adventure. There is a short description of the basics of sea trout fishing in Ireland while the map on the flip side of this brochure highlights some of the primary fisheries.



There is much more detailed information on the www.fishinginireland.info website and on the accompanying Google map: <https://tinyurl.com/ybc54pek>

SEASONS

The early part of the season in March & April is usually characterised by cold weather and cold water. At this time of year, most sea trout are still in saltwater, either on the open coastline or in estuaries, and it pays to concentrate your efforts in these areas. Bait fishing with mackerel strip or sandeel on western surf beaches and in large sheltered estuaries is generally the most productive approach, with spinning and fly fishing also capable of producing the odd fish.

As the days lengthen and get warmer in May and June, fish are more active, and start to enter freshwater. Some rivers get a run of sea trout from May, while most rivers see the first big runs in June. Coastal fishing is still very productive, with many fish feeding hard to fatten up before their upstream migration. Sea trout smolts have usually completed their outward migration to saltwater at this stage, and are starting to show up in catches as they put on weight quickly, but these fish should be played quickly and released immediately with a minimum of handling. Upstream, fish are entering rivers and lakes, and fly fishing comes into its own here. In dull cloudy weather, river fishing during daytime will produce fish, but night time fishing is usually more successful.

As we move further into July and on into August, the runs of fish into rivers increase, and by the end of August most fish that will migrate this year are already in freshwater. Night time fishing on rivers at this time of year can be very productive, as fish are much less wary and are keen to take a fly in the dark. Night time fishing can be a magical experience, with frequent encounters with wildlife such as otters, foxes and bats, while playing a good fish in total darkness is a thrill all of its own. Lough fishing on many of the western sea trout loughs is

also very productive through the summer months; drifting with a team of wet flies can provide hectic sport at times, and on many loughs there is always the chance of a bonus salmon.

By September, sea trout rivers and loughs are well stocked with fish, and provided conditions are good, fishing can be excellent right up to the end of the season. Most rivers close on 30th September, with sea trout starting to spawn, but a few continue on into early October.

EQUIPMENT

Irish rivers are small by international standards and so they can be fished with relatively light tackle, but not too light, as there is always the chance of a salmon when fishing for sea trout. For fly fishing, a nine-foot rod rated AFTM 5 or 6 will be able to cover most river fishing for sea trout. On lakes, fishing from a drifting boat requires a longer rod, and a 10/11 foot 6 or 7 weight rod is ideal. For estuary fishing, a stiff rod that can cast through the wind may be required, and a 9/10 foot 8 or 9 weight may be better suited. River flies are usually size 10-14 and often have a bit of silver in the dressing – Teal Blue & Silver, Peter Ross, Alexandra, Silver Invicta are all good choices. Lake flies can be size 8-14 and cover a multitude of styles, with Green Peters, Bumbles and Silver Daddies among some favourites. Sea trout love black flies too and a Connemara Black, Black Pennell or Bibio will work in both rivers and loughs. In the sea, flies that resemble small fish or shrimps will work best.

For spinning, trolling or bait fishing in rivers and lakes an 8-10 foot rod capable of casting up to 40 grams will suit most situations; for sandeel or bait fishing in salt water from the shore something slightly heavier might suit. In saltwater, spinners such as Tasmanian Devil or similar work well, as do small bass lures like the Kilty Killer and Dexter Wedge. In freshwater, a small Toby or a Mepps will work quite well. Bait fishing in saltwater usually involves sandeel or mackerel strip, as sea trout are feeding mostly on small fish.

A pair of breathable waders & boots, wading jacket and a wading stick are a necessity on many rivers as bank access is often poor and wading is generally the most productive way to fish.

OPEN & CLOSED SEASONS

The open season for sea trout varies depending on where in Ireland you are fishing. In some areas the season opens as early as January 1st and fishing can take place as late as October 12th depending on location. When fishing in a river estuary then the season for that river will apply. When fishing coastal areas you must check what river catchment/district you are in as the season for some coastal areas is defined by district or catchment. Please note that you must also be aware of the current status of the fishery/district (Open for harvest/Open for Catch & Release/

Closed for fishing) and also the prohibition on taking fish over 40cm where appropriate.

For further details see: <http://www.fishinginireland.info/salmon/seatroutsea.htm>

REGULATIONS

When fishing for sea trout in Ireland the following regulations apply:

- A State Licence is required to fish for sea trout (see next section)
- All sea trout caught (including kelts and baggots) must be recorded in the logbook and all sea trout over 40cm kept must be tagged
- It is an offence to kill any sea trout in the Galway, Connemara or Ballinakill Fisheries Districts including at sea from Hags Head in County Clare to Clew Bay (and in any waters flowing into Clew Bay) in the Bangor Fishery District south of a line drawn due east and west through Achill Head.
- It is prohibited sell rod caught salmon or sea trout over 40cm between January 1st and October 31st
- National bag limit for sea trout – anglers can only retain 3 sea trout in a 24 hour period (in open rivers).



ACCESS, LICENCES & PERMITS

In the Republic of Ireland, you must buy a state licence to fish for sea trout whether in freshwater or the sea. Sea trout fishing on rivers and lakes is generally controlled either by local angling clubs who usually lease the fishing rights for a few kilometres of river and make day tickets available to the visiting angler, or, alternatively, by private owners who also provide permits. These tickets can be anything from €20 - €120 and are usually available locally.

CATCH & RELEASE

We all have a responsibility to protect and conserve our fisheries so that they can be enjoyed by future generations. Most fisheries face multiple threats including pollution, water abstraction and illegal fishing, all of which have a negative impact on fish stocks. For that reason, we would ask that all anglers consider practicing Catch & Release for the majority of fish they catch. Record any trophy fish with a quick photo and then carefully return to the water. Remember: [#CPRsavesfish](#)



FURTHER INFORMATION

Angling Information

This guide provides a basic introduction to sea trout fishing in Ireland and gives a summary of some of the key fisheries. However, there are a number of resources where you can find more detailed and up-to-date angling information. Firstly, there is a dedicated angling website which has more detailed information on individual fisheries and service providers at: www.fishinginireland.info

If you are planning on fishing in Northern Ireland or on the Foyle and Carlingford catchments on either side of the border you should consult:

www.nidirect.gov.uk/information-and-services/outdoor-recreation-and-sport/angling

and

www.ufishireland.org/

IFI also produces a weekly Angling Update which provides up-to-date reports on what anglers are catching and where. You can sign up to be emailed the weekly Angling Update by emailing contact@fisheriesireland.ie

General Tourism

Ireland also has a general tourism website www.ireland.com that will help you plan your trip to Ireland. It provides a wealth of information on travel and accommodation as well as information on things to do and see while visiting the island.

Leave No Trace

Please adhere to the seven principles of Leave No Trace Ireland:

Plan ahead and prepare; Travel and camp on durable surfaces; Dispose of waste properly; Leave what you find; Minimise campfire impacts (be careful with fire); Respect wildlife; Be considerate of other visitors.

Vehicles should be parked in designated areas and in such a manner that they do not cause obstruction.



Anglers should fish responsibly and sustainably – where possible use single barbless hooks and practice no-weight, “in the water” catch and release.

www.leavenotraceireland.org/

Biosecurity

Aquatic Invasive Species and fish pathogens are readily transferred from one watercourse to another on angling tackle, boats and protective clothing. These can be very damaging to resident fish stocks, the aquatic habitat and the general environment. We would ask that all anglers inspect and clean their gear prior to travelling to Ireland to fish.

Full information on prevention of invasive species is available on our website at:

www.fisheriesireland.ie/Research/invasive-species.html

Or via Invasive Species Ireland at

<http://invasivespeciesireland.com/cops/water-users/anglers/>

Safety

Angling is a water based activity with changing conditions and dangers that are sometimes hidden. Drowning is an ever present risk and you should exercise utmost care for your own safety and that of angling partners/buddies.

Please consider the following when going fishing:

- Wear a life jacket.
- Follow advice on warning signs, permits and notices
- Don't take any risks when wading or fishing from boat, shore or bank
- Check the weather forecast and tide tables before you go
- Take time to observe weather, water and tide conditions while fishing
- Fish with a partner/buddy or let someone know where you're going
- Take a fully charged mobile phone in a waterproof case/bag.
- Wear appropriate clothing and footwear

For a more detailed guide to safety when angling please visit:

www.fishinginireland.info/safety.htm

Disclaimer

Every effort has been taken to ensure accuracy in the compilation of this publication and associated maps and web pages. Inland Fisheries Ireland cannot accept responsibility for errors or omissions therein. Some sporting activities may by their nature be hazardous and involve risk. It is recommended in such cases to take out personal accident insurance. While many operators would have public liability insurance it is always advisable to check with the establishment or operator concerned as to the level of cover carried.

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TOP PICK FISHERIES

There are numerous sea trout venues around Ireland and some of those fisheries are listed below broken down by region. There are more fisheries listed on this Google map: <https://tinyurl.com/ybc34pek>

North West

The **River Lackagh** drains a large catchment of mostly uninhabited mountain and bog, including the famous Glenveagh National Park. The system comprises a number of fisheries, including the Lackagh River, Glen Lough, the Owenmore River and Lough Beg in the national park, as well as an extensive estuary. The system gets a very good run of sea trout, with the estuary providing early season sport, and the freshwater fisheries providing quality fishing throughout the summer. Extensive improvements to access have been made in recent years. Much of the fishing is controlled by Inland Fisheries Ireland, and permits are readily available. The Lackagh also gets a good run of salmon, and is known for the quality of the spring fishing.

The **Owensboro River** and Estuary is one of the best sea trout fisheries in the north west region. The river is a spate river draining remote uplands in west Donegal, and in a flood can fish very well for salmon and sea trout. The estuary is over 10km long and produces excellent sea trout fishing from early season, with sandeel producing most fish, but fly fishing accounting for more fish as the summer comes in. Shifting sandbanks in the estuary can be dangerous, so wading deep is not advised. The river is managed by Inland Fisheries Ireland and permits are available.

The **Enne Estuary** is a large, ever changing estuary surrounded by some high dunes. Shifting sandbars every year change the contours of this productive fishery, and boat fishing provides the best access. There are a number of access points on the northern side, but access to the southern side is prevented by the military base and requires a long walk along Tullaghan Beach from the Bundoran side. Boats can be launched at the slipway in Ballyshannon. This estuary provides excellent early season fishing, with some very large sea trout taken in March and April. Most fish fall to sandeel, but fly fishing from May on can produce a lot of fish. Many fish congregate at the mouth of the estuary at low tide, and following the tide up can make finding fish easier.

The **River Moy** is famed for its salmon fishing, but the estuary is worth renown in its own right as a sea trout fishery. Fishing a ledgered sandeel is the most common method, and therefore most productive, but fly fishing also produces a lot of fish. Angling takes place from marks such as the back of Eniscrone Beach, the north eastern shore of Banna Island, The Walls, the Castle area and Rosser Bay.

West Coast

Carrowmore Lake, in remote northwest Mayo, is a large, exposed shallow lake draining a vast area of mostly unspoilt bogland. The lake gets a good run of spring salmon, with vast runs of sea trout in some years providing hectic sport. The fishing can be outstanding on Carrowmore from June through September, with the only interruptions caused by storms that can stir up the shallow bottom for a few days. The fishing is fly only and is managed by the Bangor Eris Angling Club, with permits available from the West End Bar.

The **Ballynahinch** catchment includes the famous Ballynahinch Castle and Lough Inagh fisheries. At Ballynahinch Castle, the Owenmore River drains a large catchment down to the tide, and is the first resting place for upstream migrating fish. There are several beats providing quality salmon and sea trout fishing. Upstream, Lough Inagh has river and lake fishing to rival anywhere in Ireland, with good numbers of free-taking sea trout providing great sport from June to the end of the season. Permits, guides and boats are available from Ballynahinch Castle and Lough Inagh Lodge.

Castello & Fermoy is a wonderful fishery in south Connemara, comprising a short river with 4 beats and a number of interconnected lakes upstream. The fishery gets a run of sea trout from June, and since local salmon farms closed, has had a resurgence in stocks that provide quality fishing. The river provides good fishing following a spate, with the lakes maintaining water levels for longer than other spate rivers. The main lake, Glenamurisc, is shallow and rocky, with many lies for sea trout all over the lake, while the lakes upstream such as Clogher and Fermoy also provide excellent fishing. Permits, boats and guides can be booked through the fishery manager.

West of Tralee, on the northern side of the Dingle peninsula and under the shadow of Mount Brandon, the **Owenmore River** flows into the sea at Cloghane. The estuary at Cloghane is well known for sea trout and bass, but the river itself can provide quality fishing for sea trout and grise through the summer months - the best of the fishing during July and August. There are nine lagoons on the system with two of them fishable by boat and both worth a visit in a south westerly wind right up to the end of September. Permits, boats and guides can be booked through the fishery manager.

The **Waterville** catchment includes possibly the most famed sea trout fishery in Ireland - **Lough Currane** - as well as the short river to the sea and some lakes upstream. The best sea trout fishing is on the main lake, which opens in January for spring salmon, but starts getting sea trout from April. Currane is known for big fish, with many specimen sea trout over the years to 10 lbs, usually caught between April and June. From June it gets a run of smaller fish, known locally as "juniors" and provides excellent fishing until the end of the season on October 12th. Further up the system, Loughs Namoon, Cloonaghlin, Derriena and Capal provide the best of their sport late in the season when the fish migrate towards their spawning grounds.

The **River Bandon**, which enters the sea at Kinsale, is within easy reach of anybody visiting Cork City and its environs or for those travelling the Wild Atlantic Way. The Bandon is a great game fishery, providing good fishing for salmon, sea trout and brown trout. It is a very scenic river, flowing through a lush valley and with good access from the roads that follow its course between the towns of Bandon and Dunmanway. Sea trout are taken from the estuary as far as Eniscuane.

IRELAND/NORTHERN IRELAND

The island of Ireland consists of two separate countries: the Republic of Ireland (also known as Eire or Southern Ireland) and Northern Ireland, which is part of the UK. As a result of this, there are three separate agencies that control fishing on the island of Ireland: Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) which controls the majority of the fishing in the Republic of Ireland, the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) which controls most of the fishing in Northern Ireland, and the Loughs Agency, which controls the fishing on the Foyle and Carrigford systems that span the border between Northern Ireland and Ireland. These areas are marked on the adjacent map.

This brochure only provides information on fishing in IFI controlled waters in Ireland. Anglers wishing to fish in Loughs Agency or DAERA controlled waters should check the relevant website for information before fishing:

DAERA: www.wildirect.gov.uk/information-and-services/outdoor-recreation-and-sport/angling

Loughs Agency: www.loughsireland.org/



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