



Angling
Ireland



TROUT ANGLING
ON IRISH LOUGHS



INTRODUCTION

Ireland has long been known as one of the premier trout angling destinations in Europe and anglers have been making annual pilgrimages to Ireland since the 19th century in search of hard fighting wild Irish trout. For many of those anglers, it is the lough (lake) fishing that is the cream of the crop, providing an unrivalled experience of fishing for quality wild brown trout in a wild and rugged environment.

So, what makes trout fishing in Ireland so good? Well, we have lots of water for a start, with thousands of lakes, including several very large lakes, totalling 144,000 hectares, and 70,000 kilometres of river and stream, providing vast areas of spawning and nursery habitat for young fish.

The climate is another factor. Sitting in the north Atlantic and warmed by the Gulf Stream, Ireland has a moderate oceanic climate that is ideal for brown trout, providing a long growing season. Mild, wet winters mean spawning streams remain ice-free, and frequent rain means low water levels are rare.

Geology is another factor. Much of the midlands and mid-west of Ireland is a large limestone plain, which most of our large loughs drain. The limestone lends a high alkalinity to the water, which increases productivity, and produces large hatches of natural fly over a prolonged period. All this feeding is good for trout growth, and results in good stocks of well-fed trout that are full of energy when hooked.

Finally, angling pressure in Ireland is generally low, with most fish never seeing an artificial fly, lure or bait. Even the best fisheries have plenty of space and apart from a few days at the peak of the mayfly season, you can drift a vast area without having another boat anywhere nearby.

But it's not all about the fishing. Ireland has a wealth of scenery and history to explore if you take a break from fishing. There are great restaurants and pubs, most of which serve good food as well as drink, and what better way to relax after a long day on the lake than with a tasty evening meal and a pint or two...

This brochure contains some basic information to help you get started on your Irish lough trout angling adventure. There is a short description of lough style trout fishing in Ireland and a brief introduction to some of the fisheries that consistently produce quality fish. The map on the flip side of this brochure highlights these fisheries and the key towns in which you could base yourself.



There is much more detailed information on the www.fishinginireland.info website and on the accompanying Google map: <https://goo.gl/6KkxkR>

SEASONS AND HATCHES

Ireland's mild climate means fly hatches get going early in the year, and keep going over a long season. Many lakes get a large hatch of duckfly (chironomids/buzzers) from March into April, which gets the trout feeding near the surface. Fishing wet duckfly patterns, or dry buzzer works well during a hatch, and fishing a team of buzzers deeper will often find fish when a hatch is not evident. Even when no fly are hatching, trout (often big ones!) can be caught using streamer patterns fished deep on sinking lines.

From April onwards, olives start hatching in numbers, and these hatches can be very prolific. Indeed, sometimes it can be hard to get fish to take an artificial, such is the quantity of fly on the water. Presentation and stealth are key here.

Running from the last week of April on some lakes, right into June on others, the famous

mayfly hatch sees these large upwings emerge in huge numbers on all the main limestone loughs. This triggers the busiest time of the year, for both fish and anglers, as the Irish loughs become a Mecca for trout anglers. Sometimes referred to in former times as “duffer’s fortnight”, it is still a time of plenty, when hatches of these large, nutritious insects bring trout to the surface in great numbers, and sport can be excellent. It is the one time of year when drifts can be busy, but the fishing more than makes up for it. Evening sport from May into June can be excellent, with hatches of large buzzers into darkness, as well as mayfly spinners returning to the water to lay eggs. This time of year also sees the arrival of vast shoals of perch fry on which the trout will feed avidly, these fish can provide good sport for the lure angler.

From June through July, it can often be productive to fish early and late, avoiding the middle part of the day, especially in bright sunshine. On many lakes, hatches of *Caenis* at first light can be prolific, bringing pods of large trout to the surface to gorge on thousands of these tiny flies. Dry fly fishing can be adrenaline-filled during these hatches, with watercraft and good presentation essential, but when a trout takes, be prepared for a reel-screaming run! Evening hatches of sedges get going in June and continue right through the summer, providing good late evening sport. Due to the northerly latitude, it can often remain bright until after 11pm.

During July and August, sedges provide the biggest hatches, particularly in the evening, when fishing into the dark is common as the trout continue to chase adults and rising pupae long after sundown. On some loughs, mayfly will start hatching again in July, peaking around the end of the month, but sometimes continuing on well into August. Olives will also hatch off throughout the summer, and it is advisable to have a range of patterns in the fly box to cover all options.

METHODS

Fly fishing for trout on the large Irish loughs involves fishing from a drifting boat, typically 17-19 feet long and of wooden or fibreglass construction. These boats are sturdy and well able to handle a big wave. On a windy day, it may be helpful to use a drogue to slow the drift, and in certain situations anglers may even anchor up to fish a known hot spot. Anglers must always take care when using drogues or anchors as careless use can put the boat in difficulty.

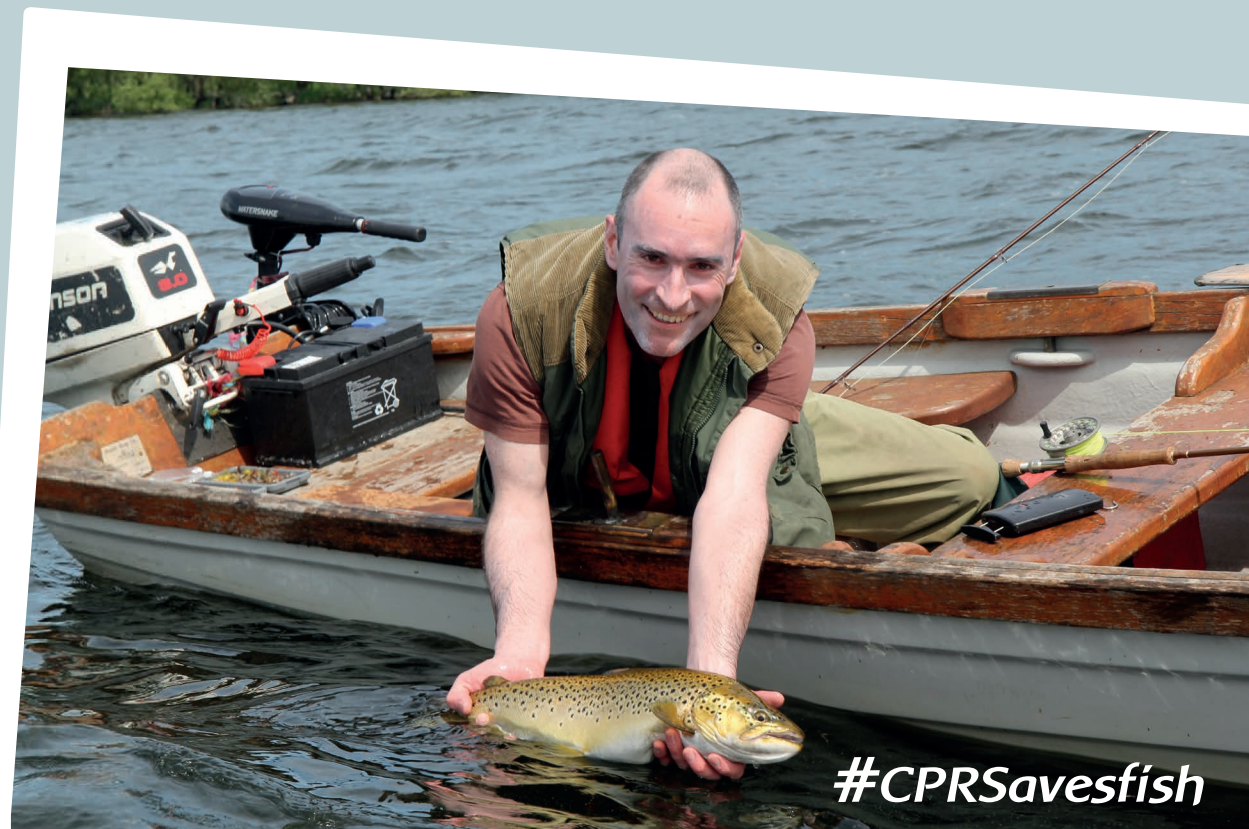
For wet fly fishing, most anglers fish a team of 3 flies on a floating or intermediate line. Rods for wet fly fishing are typically 6-7 weight 10-11 foot rods, and a mid-slow action can be preferable as it allows larger loops in the cast and fewer tangles. A longer rod allows more line control and makes it easier to “dibble” the flies on the surface for longer during the last part of the retrieve.

For dry fly fishing, a 5 or 6-weight 9-10 foot rod is fine for most situations. For certain situations, such as fishing very light leaders during a *Caenis* hatch, a 4-weight rod may be more useful as it will absorb the shock of the initial take better. A softer rod is also preferable for buzzer fishing with light leaders for the same reason.

Dapping with natural mayflies, grasshoppers or daddy-long-legs is a popular method on some of the loughs, particularly at mayfly time. A long, light telescopic spinning rod is used, with a length of floss to catch the wind between the mainline on the reel and the leader. The rod is held upright in order to allow the hook-bait to dance on the surface, lifted occasionally by the wind. There are various schools of thought on setting the hook, but generally you must allow the fish good time to take the fly and turn down before striking.

Trolling for trout involves a spinning rod, and a mount if using deadbait. For targeting ferox trout, which can be very big, a stiff rod is necessary in order to set the hook.

Spinning is also a popular method, with light spinning gear and newer type lures becoming more prevalent. A light rod that can cast 5-20g is perfect for casting lures in sheltered bays, and small Rapala-type lures are popular, although some anglers are now having success with soft plastics as well.



GUIDING & BOAT HIRE

There are a large number of guides and ghillies specialising in trout fishing in Ireland and it is usually advisable for an angler visiting a venue for the first time to hire a guide for a day or two. This is particularly the case with the larger lakes, as a guide will have local knowledge of the water and the fish holding areas which will greatly increase chances of hooking up. You will need to contact and make your own arrangements with guides and to help with this, there is a list of angling guides available at: www.fishinginireland.info/guides/index.htm

Fishing on most of the mid to large sized loughs in Ireland is usually more productive by boat and there is a list of boat hire locations available here: www.fishinginireland.info/boathire/lakes.htm

REGULATIONS

There is great variability in opening and closing dates on Irish loughs. The western loughs open for fishing on February 15th with other loughs opening on various dates in March and all lakes being open by April 1st. Most loughs close for fishing on September 30th but a handful remain open until October 12th. **By law, everybody must wear a lifejacket when boat fishing on Irish loughs.**



In most of Ireland, anglers do not need a licence to fish for trout in loughs and only rarely need a local permit. Each lough will have its own rules on bag limits and size of fish you are allowed to take, however we encourage all anglers to practice C&R (see below). Fisheries regulations are subject to change and so anglers should consult <http://fishinginireland.info/regulations.htm> for the latest information.

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](https://twitter.com/CPRsavesfish)

FURTHER INFORMATION

Angling Information

This guide provides a basic introduction to lough fishing for brown trout in Ireland and gives a summary of some of the key angling hotspots. 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 area 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, providing 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.



leave no trace
IRELAND

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/>

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.

Acknowledgements

© Published by Inland Fisheries Ireland 2018. P/N: IFI/2015/1-0451 - 004

Photos courtesy of: IFI, Shane O'Reilly, Paul O'Reilly, Emma Morrissey, & Paul Bourke.

The document includes Ordnance Survey Ireland data reproduced under OSi Copyright Permit No. MP 007508. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Ordnance Survey Ireland and Government of Ireland copyright. © Ordnance Survey Ireland.

This brochure can be made available in alternate formats upon request.

LARGE IRISH LOUGHS

This brochure features some of the large trout loughs of Ireland and the trout fishing to be experienced there. Ireland has a number of large limestone trout loughs, some of the last of their kind in Europe, and all of which provide excellent trout angling. The great western loughs are renowned all over the world for prolific hatches, and catches. Loughs Corrib, Mask, Carra, Conn and Cullin in Counties Galway and Mayo are among the best trout fisheries anywhere. Joining them in the midlands are Loughs Derg and Ree, large lakes along the River Shannon, where spent gnat fishing at mayfly time is the pinnacle of the year. Lough Sheelin in Co. Cavan is renowned for dry fly fishing, particularly for mayfly and sedge. Lough Arrow in Co. Sligo is also a very productive trout fishery.

1) **Lough Corrib** is a very large lake at 178km². The northern part of the lough is more open, and has deeper water, while the southern end is shallower, weedier and more sheltered. Corrib has a huge number of bays, islands and rocky reefs, providing a variety of fishing, and prolific hatches which produce excellent fishing. It is probably the jewel in the crown of Irish trout fishing and its reputation is well deserved. For early risers, Corrib also has some of the most spectacular midsummer Coenid hatches and early morning trout fishing anywhere.

2) **Lough Mask**, north of Corrib, at 83km², is another large body of water. Deeper and more open than Corrib, it is a fantastic fishery for wet fly fishing, with prolific fishing throughout the season. In late season, trout tend to congregate in bays near inflowing rivers and can provide hectic sport at times.

3) **Lough Sheelin** is world renowned for the quality of its fishing. At 18km², it is another big lake, but its catchment area is heavily farmed and in the past it suffered badly from poor water quality. With improved waste management, water quality has improved and Sheelin has returned to some of its former glory. Sheelin is a mayfly lough, with excellent hatches of fly, but it is as a dry fly lake it is best known. The dry fly fishing on Sheelin is spoken about in hushed reverence by anglers who know it. Never easy, it requires stealth and patience, but the reward is worth it. Best known for the spent gnat in May and into June, it also gets excellent hatches of sedge and buzzer well into the summer, providing fantastic late evening sport. Sheelin fish are a large average size, with 4lbs trout quite common and much larger regularly taken. Don't fish too fast a leader here!

4) **Lough Carra**, upstream of Mask and covering 16km², is much shallower, with crystal clear water and large areas of shallow mair-covered lakebed that resemble the tropical sand flats. The Carra trout are silver, like sea trout, and hard fighting, though they will test the angler's skill in presentation. The clear water on Carra requires light leaders and delicate presentation.

5) **Lough Derg** (117km²) and **Lough Ree** (100km²) are known for the quality of their spent gnat fishing. While Corrib probably has the best daytime mayfly fishing, the lakes of the midlands are the scene of evening sport as the spinners return to the water. Many anglers will not venture out on these lakes before 5pm and will then fish well into darkness.

6) **Lough Conn**, at 48km², is a prolific trout and salmon fishery that drains into the River Mayo. Less alkaline than the other western lakes, its trout are darker in colour, but plentiful and free-rising.

7) **Lough Cullin**, at 8km², is connected to Conn through a short channel, but is a separate and gets good hatches of ducky and mayfly. Cullin provides quality sport from late March through June, but tends to get weedy after this and is little fished in the summer.

8) **Lough Melvin** (23km²) is a fishery famous for the diversity of salmonid species present. There are four distinct strains of brown trout in the lake and there is always the chance of a salmon too. The lough spans the border between Ireland and Northern Ireland, and so different regulations apply depending on where you access the lough.

9) **Lough Arrow** (12.5km²) is a rich limestone lough which is mainly spring fed. It has relatively few nursery streams which means that trout density is low, but it also means that trout grow quickly and it is known as a big trout lake.

10) **Lough Leane** (20km²) is well situated for the tourist angler, being beside one of Ireland's top tourist towns, Killarney. The lake is located in the beautiful surroundings of Killarney National Park. It gets a great hatch of ducky in late March and April.

11) **Lough Ennell** (14.5km²) in the midlands is a lough that produces beautiful, thick shouldered brown trout that any angler would be happy to catch. It holds the record for producing Ireland's largest recorded roach caught trout at 26lbs 2oz. The trout are not prolific and the angler will have to work hard to tempt them but they are worth the effort.

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 Lough Agency, which controls the fishing on the Foyle and Carlingford 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.mirdaet.gov.uk/information-and-services/outdoor-recreation-and-sport/angling

Loughs Agency: www.fishireland.org/



FEROX TROUT

Following the last Ice Age, trout began to recolonise lakes and rivers around the coastal areas of Ireland. Ferox trout were the first colonists, ahead of the brown trout, and they still survive today in some Irish lakes. Ferox trout are genetically different from brown trout, and follow a different life strategy. Once they reach a certain size, they switch to a fish diet, which is high in protein, and so leads to rapid growth. They also live longer than brown trout, typically over 10 years, and consequently can reach a much larger size, with fish up to 20lbs possible. Indeed, a ferox trout estimated at 25lbs was caught in 2010. Fishing for ferox trout is normally done by trolling a small roach or lure at depth, often in the deeper areas of the loughs. Fishing tends to be at its best during periods of settled weather.



For a Google map, scan the QR code or use the following web link:
<https://goo.gl/6KkkkR>

● Trout Angling Centre



For up to date information on fishing in Ireland, visit www.fishinginireland.info or send an email to contact@fisheriesireland.ie

Follow us on Facebook and Twitter:
www.facebook.com/fishinginireland
@AnglingUpdate



Angling
Ireland

