

Angling
Ireland




WILD ATLANTIC WAY
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Fishing the Wild Atlantic Way

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PLANNING THE WILD ATLANTIC WAY

Planning your trip to Ireland to experience the WAW is easy and there are a number of resources available to assist you. The first of these should be Ireland's main tourism portal, Ireland.com. This site will help you plan your flights, ferries, accommodation and activities as well as giving you a taster of some of the main sights and attractions around the country. See:

Your next stop should be the dedicated WAW website which has a comprehensive list of planning tools to help you make the most of your WAW journey:

Finally, for more detailed information on fishing in Ireland please log onto our dedicated angling website:
or email us at



FISHING THE WILD ATLANTIC WAY

Following the WAW route will bring you in contact with some of the finest fishing that Ireland has to offer. As you would expect, the Atlantic coast is foremost amongst these opportunities, providing a wealth of choice for sea anglers to fish from both shore and boat. Inland, the terrain along the route is often sparse and mountainous resulting in acidic water with little feeding available for resident fish. These geological conditions lead to the development of migratory fish and some of Ireland's most famous salmon and sea trout fisheries lie right on the WAW route. Wild brown trout also populate most of the streams entering the Atlantic and while small in size, can provide great sport on light tackle. For larger trout, the great limestone loughs of counties Galway and Mayo provide an opportunity to fish for wild brown trout in the traditional Irish 'lough style', drifting in a boat casting a team of flies ahead of you. These lakes are also well known for the quality of pike they produce, with numerous pike over 100cm recorded every year. For coarse anglers, choices along the WAW are more limited but there are some very notable fisheries within a stone's throw of the route that offer excellent coarse fishing for a range of species. This guide gives a brief overview of some of the fishing available along the WAW. For more comprehensive information on fishing in Ireland and up to date angling reports, please visit our dedicated angling website:





SEA ANGLING

The coastline of Ireland is one of the most varied and spectacular in the northern hemisphere with its hundreds of tranquil bays and backwaters, roaring surf beaches, and miles of awe inspiring sea cliffs. Ireland's unique geographical position on the edge of the European continental shelf, where the inshore waters are warmed by the Gulf Stream, means that the native marine life is extremely rich and varied. In fact, visiting anglers can expect something in the region of 80 species to aim at, so anything from a blenny of a few grams to a blue shark of over 50 kg can be encountered!



Shore anglers truly have a wealth of choices of venue over a variety of ground including surf beaches, rocky outcrops, quiet inlets, bays and estuaries. One of the great experiences of Irish sea angling is to fish a west coast storm beach when a big surf is running. The roar of the waves can be heard from afar as the surf, swelling and then pounding ashore, leaves a waste of suds in their backwash. The beaches are for the most part shallow and safe, allowing the careful angler to wade among the breakers and enjoy some incomparable angling. Numerous species can be targeted on Irish beaches including bass, rays, dogfish, whiting and flat fish (dabs, flounder, plaice & turbot).

There are also many miles of rocky shoreline and two of the rock fisherman's favourite species, pollack and wrasse are common all around the coastline. There is great fishing for these species from the craggy shorelines of the lovely Beara, Iveragh and Dingle peninsulas in the southwest, but they may also be caught in similar locations all around the coast. There is also very good rock fishing off the islands, such as Valentia in the south-west, and along the Clare coast.

A map detailing a number of shore marks around the coast is given at:



Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) has a number of publications available for download that give detailed information on the shore fishing right around the route of the WAW and they are available to download at:



Ireland has a fleet of over 100 boats that are licenced to take anglers deep sea fishing from many points around the coastline, fishing for species such as blue shark on the drift, conger, ling or cod from sunken wrecks, and for tope and flatfish over sandy ground. For those completely new to angling, an evening spent mackerel fishing from a charter boat is often an easy and enjoyable way to become acquainted with the sport.

Charter boat fishing is lively and interesting even before a line is cast; the skipper will assemble a group of anglers who may or may not know each other at the beginning of the day, but who will surely be well acquainted by the end of it, especially if they have had sport with a big shark or skate. Usually tackle may be hired, so all the angler needs is a good set of waterproofs and a sense of adventure. The skippers have well equipped craft with modern navigational aids but for most, who have come from several generations of fishermen, their knowledge of the sea is instinctive. A lot of local lore is passed on during the day and even more in the evening when the boat is tied up and the catch distributed and the scene shifts to a waterfront pub. A list of all registered and insured deep sea fishing boats is available here:



Bass (or sea bass) have become a much sought after sport fish in recent years, and when you mention bass to a European angler, Ireland is probably the first country that will come to mind. Ireland is lucky to have some of the best bass stocks in Europe with greater numbers and bigger sizes than other countries. This is in part because Ireland has long had laws banning commercial fishing for bass, restricting it to an angling only species.

Bass are common along much of the southern part of the WAW route from Kinsale up as far as Ballybunion, with hotspots at places such as Clonakilty and Courtmacsherry in Co. Cork or Waterville and Dingle in Co. Kerry. They can also be found in pockets along the Clare coast and up into Galway Bay. They are caught from a wide range of venues including beach, estuary and rock. Anglers use various methods in pursuit of bass, with lure fishing now being more popular than the traditional bait fishing and fly fishing popular with those who like a challenge.

Bass fishing can be influenced by the state of the tide, with the fish tending to be more active around periods of spring tide. The biggest difficulty is usually locating bass as they constantly move from place to place in search of prey. For this reason, using a professional angling guide can make the difference between a good day and a blank. A list of angling guides is available [here](#):



SALMON & SEA TROUT

Ireland has some of the most accessible and keenly priced salmon and sea trout fishing available anywhere, and luckily, the vast majority of this fishing is based along the route of the WAW. The frequent (and often persistent) showers of rain along the Atlantic seaboard may discourage 'normal' holidaymakers but they serve the game angler well, ensuring that the rivers and lakes en route are regularly replenished with the fresh water needed to bring salmon and sea trout on their journey upstream. Rivers in the west of Ireland are often short, rocky and relatively small, tumbling down from the mountains and flowing for a few miles through heather and gorse before entering the sea without ever really reaching maturity. They provide the angler with a very intimate angling experience, quite different to fishing on a larger river. Timing is usually critical to success on these smaller spate rivers, with the best fishing occurring after a good flood of fresh water livens things up a bit. Even if conditions don't come right on the river, all is not lost as there is often a lough or two on the system that will hold taking fish throughout the season.



Fishing can begin as early as January 1st on a handful of fisheries. After that, the remainder of fisheries open on various dates in February, March, April and May, with the majority of fisheries closing on September 30th. There are two distinct runs of salmon with the first 'spring' run beginning in the early months of the year followed by a run of smaller but more numerous 'grilse' which traditionally begins in late June or July. All anglers looking to fish for salmon or sea trout must be in possession of a State licence which is available for purchase here:

In addition to the State licence, it is normal for the angler to pay locally for a permit for the particular fishery on which they are fishing. Salmon are a managed species in Ireland and every year analysis is done on each fishery to determine the health of the salmon stock. If the stock is deemed to be in decline the fishery may be opened on a catch & release basis only, or even closed for a period. IFI produces a list of the status of each fishery at the start of every calendar year.

A map of the primary salmon fisheries along the WAW is available here:



Some guide books that may assist with fishing along the route are available for download here:



Beginning at the southern end of the WAW, the River Bandon is the first quality salmon and sea trout fishery heading north along the route. Rising near Dunmanway, it flows through the lush west Cork countryside before entering the sea at Kinsale. It fishes best from June to September and for those looking to explore the Bandon, a good place to start would be:

Moving westwards into Co. Kerry, the town of Waterville on the tip of the Iveragh peninsula is a famous game angling centre for both salmon and sea trout. The primary fishery is Lough Currane, a beautiful lake to fish, no more than a stone's throw from the sea and surrounded as it is by the Macgillycuddy's Reeks mountains. There are also some smaller lakes (Derriana, Cloonaghlin and Namona) higher up the system which are even more remote and are enchanting places to spend an afternoon. For more information see

The popular tourist town of Killarney is also a good base for some fishing as the River Laune has a run of salmon that move up into the lakes surrounding the town. The salmon on the lakes tend to be caught on the troll while the river contains some good fly water.

The city of Galway is the gateway to the Connemara area but it also has one of Ireland's most prolific salmon holding pools right in the centre of the city. The Galway Fishery as it is known, is immediately downstream



of the Galway weir and all the salmon that run the Corrib system must negotiate this weir en route. An angler who hooks a salmon on this fishery will likely have an audience of interested observers from the bridge which spans the river immediately downstream of the weir. The fishery itself is small and can only accommodate a limited number of anglers at any one time, so advanced booking is recommended.

Moving westwards from Galway you enter into Ireland's Connemara area, famous for its wild and rugged landscapes and, amongst anglers, for its fisheries. Names such as Costello & Fermoy (made famous by T.C. Kingsmill Moore), Ballynahinch/Inagh, Kylemore, the Erriff and Delphi are all noted sea trout or salmon fisheries where the angler can enjoy their sport in one of Ireland's most scenic and unspoilt areas.

Moving northwards along the WAW, the north Mayo area has a number of noted game fisheries and foremost amongst these is the River Moy, Ireland's most productive salmon fishery. There are spring fish caught in the Moy from early in the season but the system is most famed for its prolific grilse run, which normally occurs between June and late August, with the peak run in mid-July. The Moy is divided up into a number of different fisheries and information on these fisheries, including contact details and permit prices, can be obtained at the following link:

Also in the north Mayo area, Carrowmore Lake near the town of Bangor Erris, is now one of Ireland's most productive sea trout fisheries



and it is also a prime spot for a spring salmon. The salmon fishing can begin as early as February if conditions are mild enough while the best of the sea trout fishing is in July. Fishing is from a boat only and permits are available locally. See:

Donegal is the northernmost county on the WAW and is known as a county of wild weather, bog and heather. For the angler, Donegal has no shortage of game fisheries and more often than not, Ireland's first salmon of the year comes from the River Drowes, which enters the sea at Bundoran at the south of the county. This short river has over 80 named pools and is the traditional venue for anglers to visit on Jan 1st every year in search of a spring salmon. These spring salmon are fished for from January to May, with a run of grilse commencing in May/June.

The Drowes drains Lough Melvin which is famous for its diversity of salmonid species. Salmon, Char and three distinct strains of trout (Sonaghan, Gilaroo and Ferox) are all present in the lake and so the angler has plenty to choose from.

Other rivers worth fishing in Donegal include the Eany, Owenea, Glen and the Gweebarra, all of which are spate rivers meaning that timing is essential if one is to get the best of them. These rivers will be in prime condition in a falling flood and can provide excellent fishing in very picturesque surroundings. All these rivers are well managed with named pools and beat systems providing easy access to the fisheries. To book accommodation or buy permits for the Donegal area visit:



WILD BROWN TROUT FISHING

Brown trout are the most widespread freshwater fish species in Ireland and are present in most of our rivers and lakes. In fact, they are so widespread that there is a particular term used in the Irish language to describe the weather best suited to fishing for trout! “Breac Aimsir”, which is translated as ‘trout weather’, describes weather that is neither too hot nor too cold, with a bit of wind and a bit of rain and plenty of cloud. It’s the type of day that would have any trout angler itching to be afloat on a lake or patrolling a river in search of their quarry. Your route along the WAW will bring you to many trout holding waters and whether you prefer to fish for small trout in mountain streams or chase large ferox trout in our great western lakes, there will be something along the way to suit. The following pages give a brief description of the trout fishing along the WAW and a map of the key fisheries is available here:





Ireland is lucky to have some of the last truly wild brown trout lake fisheries in Europe and a number of these lakes are situated on, or close to the route of the WAW. Starting from the famous Lough Corrib in Galway and travelling northwards, one encounters, in turn, Loughs Mask, Carra, Cullin and Conn, each offering the trout angler a slightly different experience of traditional Irish lough fishing. This type of fishing takes place from a boat, which is set on a 'drift' as the wind pushes the boat slowly over fish holding water. Normally the boat will contain two anglers, one at each end and they will cast a team of three flies in front of them and then 'strip' them back in the hope of mimicking aquatic insects hatching off. This type of fishing has been carried out for generations on these loughs and each lough will have a number of expert guides and 'ghillies' that can help the tourist angler get the most from this unique way of fishing.

These fisheries come into their own from March onwards as different species of fly begin to hatch and the trout commence to feed in the top layer of water where they can be tempted by using an artificial fly fashioned to mimic the natural. The chironomids or 'duckfly' are the first species of fly to hatch and they normally appear around St. Patrick's Day on March 17th; this hatch lasts for about three weeks. Then the lake olives appear in late April and generally last until early May. The most famous fly hatch on these lakes is the fabled mayfly which can begin to hatch after the first week of May and can last until early June. At this time the lakes are alive with anglers, many of whom take holidays to coincide with the mayfly fishing and some great bags of fish can be taken. For the rest of the season, the lakes are quieter but patient and persistent anglers can still catch some great fish, particularly fishing early in the morning during caenis hatches or late into the evening when sedges and chironomids are most active.



While Ireland's large limestone loughs are rightly renowned for their quality wild brown trout fishing, there are numerous smaller loughs that can offer excellent sport in some wild, windy and unspoilt places. These loughs are sometimes well off the beaten track and will rarely see an angler, but those that make the effort can be rewarded with a fine day's fishing. The average size of the trout in these loughs is often small but they can make up for this by being voracious feeders, coming readily to the fly.

Typical of these type of loughs is the Cloonee system near Kenmare in Co. Kerry. This system consists of six loughs of varying size and they are increasingly wild and remote as you progress up the system. At the bottom of the system, the Cloonee loughs are boat fishing only, and boats are available for hire locally. The lakes are shallow and the freely rising trout available throughout provide great sport. Further up the system, Loughs Uragh and Inchiquin have both boat and bank fishing with good access points. Trout in these lakes are also free rising and there is a chance of a sea trout late on in the season. From here on we are really getting off the beaten track and three more lakes lie waiting for the angler prepared to hike through the open countryside. With beguiling Irish names like Lough Napeasta (The Serpents Lake), Cummeenadillure Lough and Cummeenaloughan, these lakes represent the typical mountain lakes found in the west of Ireland. The trout here are not giants and they can be stubborn, but this won't be enough to dampen your spirits when surrounded by so much natural beauty.



On your route along the WAW you will undoubtedly encounter numerous bridges, crossing rivers both large and small. You might stop, as anglers are almost duty bound to do when crossing a river, and you might say to yourself “I wonder is there a trout or two in there...?” Well, the answer will most likely be “yes”, as the majority of rivers you will meet along the WAW will contain wild trout...of some description. The terrain in the west of Ireland is harsh, and feeding is often poor for a trout and so many of them will opt to make the journey out to sea, where the feeding is better, only to return a year or two later as well-fed sea trout. There will always be some resident brown trout that remain in these rivers but, in Ireland, they tend to be largely ignored in favour of the sea trout and salmon which are the preferred choice of native anglers. For this reason, there is no real organised brown trout fishing on many of the rivers along the WAW and you are likely to get a ‘funny’ look if you enquire locally about the possibilities of fishing for brown trout in them, “Sure what would you want to do that for...?”

There are some rivers along the way that buck this trend and have some worthwhile and easily accessible fishing for wild brown trout, and the first of these lies at the very southern tip of the WAW. Kinsale, the southern starting point of the WAW, is where the River Bandon enters the sea and it is a great mixed fishery with good fishing for salmon, sea trout and brown trout. The river is tidal from Kinsale upstream to Innishannon but is well worth fishing for trout from that point all the way up to Dunmanway. Like many Irish trout rivers, the best daytime fly fishing is from April to June and again in September with evening fishing the better option in the summer months. For those looking to explore the Bandon, a good place to start would be:



Another river in Co. Cork that has some excellent fishing for brown trout is the River Sullane which is part of the River Lee system. A good base for fishing this river is the town of Macroom which is a small deviation from the main WAW route, being about a 50 minute drive from Kinsale or a 40 minute drive from Killarney. Fishing on the Sullane is good throughout the season and trout are of a decent size with fish over 1kg a possibility. It has a good local angling club and angling guide, making access to the river easy. From Macroom it is also easy to strike out to some of the tributaries of the River Blackwater at Kanturk or Millstreet, all of which offer good fishing for wild brown trout.

Further north, in Co. Mayo, a 30 minute drive inland from Westport will bring you to the town of Ballinrobe, taking its name from the River Robe which flows through the town. This is a river with good access throughout and the fishing is free with no permit required. The average size of resident trout is quite large and they are generally free rising. Towards the end of the season, the numbers of trout in the Robe are bolstered by a run of trout from Lough Mask on their way to their spawning beds. There is good fly water along the river, particularly around Crossboyne and Hollymount and both nymph fishing and dry fly fishing produce results, with the dry fly proving particularly good on summer evenings. It is an easy diversion for any trout angler willing to break away from the coastal route of the WAW in pursuit of their sport.



COARSE & PIKE FISHING

Apart from a couple of very notable exceptions, there are relatively few venues for coarse and pike anglers along the WAW. The nature of the terrain means that the rivers and lakes along the route are more suitable to salmonids than for coarse fish and pike. There are however a small number of quality options within striking distance of the WAW.

Starting at the southern end of the WAW, the Lee Valley Reservoirs including Inniscarra Lake, are the first main stop for coarse and pike anglers alike. These lakes contain very good stocks of most of the usual coarse species and are popular competition venues. Inniscarra Lake in particular, has recently been developed for access for anglers and now boasts hundreds of pegs which were put to great use at the World Feeder Championships, held on the lake in 2014. The healthy stocks of coarse fish encourage the growth of good pike and the lakes are prime pike angling venues with plenty of pike over the 100cm mark. There is a good guiding infrastructure around the lake to ensure that you can make the most of your visit.

Heading northwards, about 30 minutes' drive from Limerick city, the twin towns of Killaloe/Ballina lie at the southern end of Lough Derg. This large lough is quite likely Ireland's most prolific pike water both in terms of numbers and quality of pike it produces. Pike of 100cm are caught almost every week and fish to 110cm and larger are not



uncommon. It is a long lake with plenty of bays and inlets and one needs to fish from a boat to get the most out of it. Luckily, Lough Derg is serviced by a large number of boat hire operators and angling guides that can ensure you have the best chance of catching. It is a top coarse angling venue too, with all the main species present but with hard fighting hybrids often providing the bulk of the catch. Easily accessible bank fishing can be at a premium, but for the serious angler in search of large bags of fish, the local tackle shop can prebait swims on remote shores of lake islands making a 50kg + bag a possibility.

For a smaller and more intimate experience, the lakes around Corofin in Co. Clare offer the roving coarse and pike angler a chance to explore some less frequented angling venues. These lakes on the Fergus river system are all noted coarse angling fisheries and hold healthy stocks of most species, with tench a particular attraction. Bank access is available on many lakes in the area and pole, waggler and feeder tactics will all produce. For the pike angler, boat fishing will usually be more productive, allowing you to cover more water. In fact, these lakes are well suited to float tube fishing with a lure or fly rod as they are small enough to be manageable using this versatile way of fishing. There are plenty of lakes to explore and an angler in a float tube could cover two or three in a day. For more information on the main lakes on this system visit:



One can't discuss pike fishing in Ireland without mentioning the great western lakes in the north west of the country, each of which have the capacity to produce very large pike. Loughs Corrib, Mask, Conn and Cullin are known trout fisheries but also hold good stocks of coarse fish and top quality pike, with some very large specimens recorded over the years. These lakes are big and fishing by boat is generally the preferred method with plenty of boats available to hire locally. Locating pike can be difficult on these waters and using an angling guide will greatly improve your chances. If not, look for weedy areas of the lake or reed fringed bays which provide cover for pike. Areas where rivers or streams enter or flow out of the lakes are often hotspots, particularly in August/September when trout are preparing to run up these streams to spawn.

Maps showing these coarse & pike angling hotspots are available here:



Coarse:

Pike:



ACCESS AND COUNTRY CODE

Access does not imply a right of way and anglers should ensure that they have the necessary permission to enter and cross private lands. Where possible, anglers should walk along the river bank or lake shore.

Anglers should ensure that gates are closed and that fences are not broken or damaged. Care should be taken with crops and livestock. Litter must not be discarded and no fires are allowed. Vehicles should be parked in designated areas and in such a manner that they do not cause obstruction.



Whilst every effort has been made to ensure that the information contained in this brochure and associated maps & links is accurate, no responsibility will be accepted by Inland Fisheries Ireland for any errors or inaccuracies contained herein.

CREDITS

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WAW ANGLING MAPS

SEA ANGLING MAP

<https://tinyurl.com/y9aeo6so>



SALMON & SEA TROUT ANGLING MAP

<https://tinyurl.com/ycbrtfg5>

BROWN TROUT ANGLING MAP

<https://tinyurl.com/y8t42lg3>



PIKE ANGLING MAP

<https://tinyurl.com/y86bogf3>

COARSE ANGLING MAP

<https://tinyurl.com/y9y692xo>





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