



# Interior Alaska Fishing

## Getting Started

Interior Alaska is a stellar place for fishing enthusiasts to visit. The freshwater rivers, streams, and lakes are teeming with many species of fish including: arctic grayling, dolly varden, northern pike, sheefish, arctic char, rainbow trout, and Pacific salmon.

There are many places to fish in Interior Alaska on the road system, however, some of the best fishing will be in remote areas of the state. There are



many local guides who can assist you with planning your fishing trip—near or far away. Often guided trips will outfit you with your license, gear, food, and more. The Fairbanks Convention and Visitors Bureau can provide you with information about local guides and related businesses.

If you decide to go out on your own, you'll need to purchase a state of Alaska fishing license. Fishing licenses can be purchased at local sporting goods stores, some grocery and convenience stores, and online. Fishing license costs are listed annually in the fishing regulations or at [www.admin.adfg.state.ak.us/license](http://www.admin.adfg.state.ak.us/license). An additional stamp is required for anglers 16 and older when fishing for king salmon. **Always check the latest sportfishing regulations pamphlet before fishing because many lakes and streams have specific bag limits and rules.**

## Where to Go

The following are some of the more common places to fish along the road system in interior Alaska. Please make sure to check the regulations before you put your line in the water! If you have questions, you can contact the Alaska Department of Fish & Game, Sport Fish Division at **(907) 459-7207** or by stopping by their office at 1300 College Road.

### Chena River



The Chena River is accessible in many places, all of which are great places to fish. The best fishing, however, is on the upper Chena accessible by many locations just off Chena Hot Springs Road.

The Chena and its tributaries have great arctic grayling fishing, which are catch and release only. There is also a run of king salmon in late July, as well as a chum salmon run from mid-August to mid-October.

### Chatanika River

Within an hour's drive from Fairbanks up the Steese Highway, you can access a number of pull-offs between Mile 29 and 39 for access to the Chatanika River. The river offers good grayling fishing all summer. There are small runs of chum, king, and silver salmon between late-July and October. The river also

## Where to Go

has whitefish, northern pike, burbot, and sheefish.



### Elliot Highway

Between milepost 11.4 and 32.9 there are several turnoffs to access the Chatanikia River and other creeks for grayling, pike, sheefish, and whitefish.

### Dalton Highway

There are numerous places along the 414 mile Dalton highway to fish. At the Alaska Public Lands Information Center ask for the "Fishing the Dalton Highway" publication for more detailed information. The best time to fish along the road is from July through mid-September. You have an opportunity to catch arctic grayling, dolly varden, lake trout, burbot, and northern pike.

## Down the Richardson Highway...

### Chena Lakes Recreation Area

The Chena Lakes recreation area is about 15 miles south of Fairbanks off the Richardson Highway on Laurence Rd. The lake is stocked with rainbow trout and land-locked silver salmon. Grayling, pike, whitefish, and burbot are in the 4 miles of the Chena River within the park. All boating here is non-motorized.

### Tanana River

The Tanana River, which flows through Delta Junction, Fairbanks, and Nenana offers great pike fishing. Also try for sheefish, burbot, and king, chum, and silver salmon near freshwater streams entering the river. A riverboat or guide is almost always necessary on this large river.

### Salcha River

The Salcha is a clear water tributary of the Tanana River. The Richardson Highway crosses it at Mile 323. Salmon fishing is good here in late-July for kings and chums. Upstream fishing is good for grayling.

### Delta Clearwater River

The Delta is one of the few road accessible clearwater tributaries of the Tanana. The constant temperature of the spring that feeds this river allows the water to be open year round. There are grayling and whitefish in the river and there is also a September silver salmon run.

### Quartz Lake

Located at Mile 277 of the Richardson Highway, this lake is stocked with rainbow trout and silver salmon. It is 86 miles from Fairbanks.

### Birch Lake

This lake, stocked with silver salmon and rainbow trout, is located at Mile 308 of the Richardson Highway. It is 54 miles from Fairbanks.

### Moose Creek & Piledriver Slough

Located at Mile 344 on the Richardson Highway (25 Miles from Fairbanks) anglers can fish for grayling, whitefish, northern pike, burbot, and rainbow trout. Arctic grayling are catch and release only.



Lake Trout are the largest freshwater fish in Alaska

# Types of Fish

## Harding Lake

Located at Mile 327 on the Richardson Highway, this popular lake is stocked with silver salmon, rainbow trout, and sheefish. It also has northern pike, lake trout, and burbot. Northern Pike fishing is closed year round on Harding Lake.

## Coal Mine Road Lakes

This group of eight small lakes is located 22 miles South of Delta Junction at mile 242.4 of the Richardson highway. Species present include arctic char, arctic grayling, rainbow trout, and few lake trout. The road is not maintained, there are no facilities, and camping is primitive. Because of bankside alders, using a tube, canoe, or wading out will increase your chances at landing some fish here.

## Gulkana River

The Gulkana River originates in the Alaska Range and can be accessed from the Richardson Highway near Glennallen, Gakona, Paxson, and Summit Lakes. It has outstanding grayling fishing, as well as a summer run of king and sockeye salmon. There are fewer numbers of lake trout, and catch and release fisheries for rainbow trout and steelhead trout. Pick up the booklet "Fishing the Gulkana River" from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game for more helpful information.



Arctic grayling are common throughout Interior Alaska

# Types of Fish

## Arctic Grayling

Grayling have a tender mouth so do not set your hook too hard. Use small gray flies, or use nymphs where dry flies are not working. Also, Mepps spinners or small spoons can be tried. Average size is 14-16 inches, while a trophy size grayling must be at least three pounds. Many streams have catch and release rules in the spring to protect spawning so make sure to check the regulations.

## Arctic Char/Dolly Varden

A trophy sized arctic char must be at least 10 pounds.

## Rainbow Trout (Steelhead)

This popular sport fish is not indigenous to the Tanana or Yukon drainages, but has been success-



fully stocked in many lakes throughout the interior. Big rainbows are bottom feeders, they want small fish or eggs, not insects. Smaller rainbows feed on surface insects. Try wet or dry flies with a pattern including red and /or black. Grasshoppers, nymphs, worms, and even cheese or corn can be used. Most rainbows are one to four pounds; trophy fish must be at least 15 pounds.

## Northern Pike

Pike are common in many of the lakes and streams in the Kuskokwim, Tanana, and Yukon drainages. Pike fishing is generally best in June. A wire leader is a must when fishing for pike because of their large sharp teeth. Needle nose pliers are a handy tool for removing hooks. Any bright fast medium sized moving lure or spoon will attract pike. An average pike is three to 12 pounds, with trophy fish weighing at least 15 pounds.

## Lake Trout

Troll lures moving slowly through deep cold waters

## For More Information...

are the best for lake trout. Use bright spinners or spoons. Average lake trout weigh five to 20 pounds, and at least 20 pounds for a trophy fish.

### **Burbot**

Burbot may be taken in fresh water with more than one hook, although some restrictions apply. Fish weedy bays and inlets using hooks baited with meat or small fish. A trophy burbot weighs in at 8 pounds or more.

### **Whitefish**

The various species of whitefish (including sheefish) in Interior Alaska prefer small food and will avoid leaders and large lures. Spearing is allowed on certain streams in the fall, check the regulations for more details. A trophy sheefish must weight 30 pounds.

### **King Salmon (Chinook Salmon)**

King salmon are strong fish so allow yourself a lot of 20-30 pound test line. Keep your hook very sharp.

Fish deep and slow with salmon eggs, large spinners, or spoons. Average kings are 10-40 pounds, and minimum trophy weight is 50 pounds.



### **Silver Salmon (Coho Salmon)**

For silvers, fish along river banks, deep quite holes, or along the bottom. Try medium sized spoons and spinners or wet flies. Average size is 12 pounds and trophy weight is 20 pounds.

## **Fishing with Kids**

When fishing with kids it's generally helpful to be someplace where they have a good chance of catching something. One of the best places to go is Chena Lakes. The lakes are stocked, and although the fish are smaller on average, they tend to come close to the shoreline making them easier to catch.



Birch and Quartz lakes are located a little bit farther out of town and the best fishing generally requires a boat, but it can be a good place to continue building skills. Stream fishing tends to be a little more difficult for kids, so after graduating from the lakes try Piledriver Slough, the Chatanika, or Chena Rivers. Finally remember, kids don't float! Always make sure they have a personal flotation device, or PFD.

### **Fishing Reports**

Weekly fishing reports are produced by the Department of Fish and Game, Sport Fish Division and can be accessed at their web site or recorded phone message (see below).

#### **For More Information:**

*Alaska Department of Fish and Game: 1300 College Road  
or call (907) 459-7207*

*Alaska Public Lands Information Center: 101 Dunkel Street  
Suite 110 or call (907) 459-3730.*

## **Alaska Sport Fishing Reports**

**Website:**

**<http://www.sf.adfg.state.ak.us/FishingReports/index.cfm/FA/>**

**Phone: (907) 459-7207**

