

Trout Fishing in Orkney

Orkney has a wonderful array of lochs to fish for trout. There are six main lochs on the mainland and also some good locations on the outer islands. One of the Orkney Trout Fishing Association's (OTFA) key recommendations for visitors new to Orkney fishing, is to not cast a fly in the same place twice. Locals adopt the step and cast approach. Local brown trout do not move as far as rainbow so you need to move after them.

Harry

This is the most famous loch, and the largest on Orkney mainland, extending to 2500 acres. It will produce fish from the beginning to the end of the season with May, June, and July the best months. The 14 miles of coastline make it the best for shore fishing. As the season progresses and fish move deeper, it is best to use a boat. Brown trout between 10 oz and 2 lbs are often caught. Conditions can change very quickly and you need to vary your fly according to the most prolific food item.

Boat hire is available.

Boardhouse and Hundland

Situated in Birsay, Boardhouse is a brown peat stained loch, giving good shore fishing, particularly earlier in the year, and excellent boat fishing all season long due to the lack of skerries. Trout are around 11 to 14 oz and daphnia is the major food source. A floating line is the best thing to start with. Hundland lies close by and feeds Boardhouse. It has many similarities but you need to watch out for skerries when boat fishing.

Boat hire is available.

Swannay

The most northerly Mainland loch, also in Birsay, this is slightly peat stained. It is good for larger fish but can have periods of little activity. Best months are May and June.

Boat hire is available.

Loch of Stenness

This is the most difficult loch for visitors to come to grips with. It is tidal and the depth of water and salinity vary dramatically at different times of the month and day. This loch is best for shore fishing and most locals tend to fish when the water is low. It also has sea trout as well as brown trout. You need a floating or intermediate line and often you find fish in very shallow water.

Boat hire is available.



Kirbister

This loch is recommended for beginners because of the large numbers of trout and their responsiveness in any conditions. Fish do tend to be on the small side.

Loch of Skail

Close to Skara Brae, this loch is exclusively for OTFA anglers. It holds some of the largest trout to be found on the mainland.

Outer Islands

A number of lochs have been restocked in the last 10 to 15 years in Stronsay, Westray, Sanday and Hoy. The most famous two are North and Bea in Sanday. Very large trout have been caught here and it is worth a short ferry ride to experience these lochs.

How to organise your fishing holiday

The Orkney and Shetland Touring Company is a local tour operator who will happily arrange your ferry crossings, car hire other transport needs and accommodation. Because of our size, we have particularly good prices with Northlink ferries. For fishing, we particularly recommend the Merkister Hotel because of its excellent local knowledge and location on the Loch of Harry. We can base a package on any accommodation. If you would like to combine your holiday with other activities we can tailor make this.

Facts about Trout Fishing in Orkney

Seasons

Sea Trout: 25 February to 31 October

Brown Trout: 15 March to 6 October

Permission to fish

There is no permit required to fish on the majority of Orkney lochs. However, if you wish to use OTFA facilities, launch a boat, or access the Loch of Skail, you will need to contact the association. Full Membership is £20.00; visiting Angler £15.00; concessionary (local anglers only) OAP £10.00; invalid £10.00; juniors (school attendee) £5.00.

Boats

Boats are available for hire on most lochs

Ghillies

These can be arranged through the Merkister Hotel



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Minimum size limits

Return sizes recommended by the OTFA are:

Sea trout – 305 mm or 12 inches.

Brown trout – 250 mm or 10 inches.

Equipment

The essential items are:

- (a) Fly fishing rod of 9 to 11 ft.
- (b) A simple reel with a floating line (other types of fly can be used, but are not required for most waters and at least 30 metres of backing)
- (c) A spool of nylon, approx 6 lb breaking strain for making casts.
- (d) A selection of wet flies of sizes 10 to 14.
- (e) Chest or thigh waders are useful, as is a landing net!
- (f) Clothing – both wind and waterproof clothing. Remember that Orkney is further north than Oslo and the wind can be cold.

Contacts

The Orkney Trout Fishing Association is a non-profit making voluntary body, dedicated to the preservation and enhancement of game fishing throughout the islands of Orkney. The Association operates a trout hatchery, and restocking has yielded excellent results.

