



For anglers looking to hook a monster halibut, or one of the several varieties of Alaska's most popular salmon, world-class fishing can be found throughout Alaska. The following describes some of Alaska's most popular fish, where to find them and when to catch them.

[King salmon](#), known as chinooks, are Alaska's biggest salmon species. King salmon can be caught in the ocean and in freshwater rivers all over Alaska. King salmon tend to have black irregular spotting on its fins, and can range in color from a reddish tint to almost black when spawning. May through July is the best time to fish for them.

[Coho salmon](#), known as silvers, are easily spotted by their brilliant silver color, which is brighter than that of other salmon species. Silver salmon are found from the Inside Passage to the Chukchi Sea. They range from eight to 12 pounds, can be as large as 30 pounds, and put up a strong fight for anglers in search of a challenge. Like king salmon, they have black spots on their fins. The best time to fish for silvers is from mid-July to as late as November.

[Sockeye salmon](#) are known as reds for the rich color of their meat, and for the color they turn while spawning. Fishing for reds is most popular along the Kenai and Russian rivers on the Kenai Peninsula, and also on the Copper River, although vast commercial harvesting of these popular fish takes place in Bristol Bay. Reds weigh anywhere from four to eight pounds, but occasionally reach twice that size.

[Pink salmon](#) is recognizable for the hump on its back, which is where it gets the moniker "humpy." Technically, the humps only appear on adult males before spawning, so identifying pinks can be tricky. Pinks are the smallest of the Pacific salmon, averaging 3.5 to four pounds and reaching lengths of up to 25 inches. They have a bluish-silver tint and large black spots on the tail fins. Fishing for pinks occurs between late June and mid-October in most coastal areas of Alaska.

[Chum salmon](#) is known as dog salmon because many Alaskan dog mushers feed them to their teams. These fish are abundant throughout the entire state and relatively easy to catch. Chum can be hard to distinguish from other salmon species, but a subtle green and purple tint and larger than normal teeth are among distinguishing characteristics. While smaller than kings, chums range from four to 30 pounds but average seven to 18 pounds. Chums are also a traditionally smoked for winter use and are a staple of

subsistence life.

[Halibut](#) are the largest of all the flat fish, with some exceeding 400 pounds. Female halibut grow faster and are typically larger than males of the same age (males rarely reach 100 pounds). Halibut spawn November through March and move seasonally between shallow and deep waters. Found as far north as Nome, along the Aleutian Chain and throughout the Inside Passage, halibut are usually found on or near the bottom of the sea over mud, sand, or gravel banks and are caught at 90-900 feet.

Fishing by Region

One thing is for sure, anglers can find fish any time of year, in any part of the state where there's water. From the Inside Passage to more arctic locales in the Far North region, there are plenty of places to catch a fish in Alaska.

[Far North](#)

Fishing spots in the Far North are primarily accessible by air, although riverboats can occasionally be rented at villages along the waterways. Lakes in the Brooks Range are the most popular, but may not be ice-free until July.

[Interior](#)

The majority of the lakes and rivers in the region can be reached by air, boat or by vehicle. Popular fishing locations include the Charley River for king, chum and coho salmon, and Rainbow Lake, known for excellent rainbow trout fishing.

[Southwest](#)

The most prized fish in the area are the trophy-sized rainbow trout, although salmon fishing is excellent in the river systems throughout the region. Iliamna Lake is Alaska's largest lake and supports the largest red salmon run in the world. On the coast, recreational anglers and commercial fisherman reel in gigantic Pacific halibut.

[Inside Passage](#)

Many species are plentiful in the Inside Passage. Salmon is the most popular in the area — all five species of Pacific salmon can be found in Sitka Sound, among other locations. Halibut charters are also popular.

[Southcentral](#)

For fishing in a more urban setting, Southcentral Alaska is the destination of choice. In Anchorage, office workers clock out on summer evenings and head straight to Ship Creek to fish for salmon for the night's dinner. But smaller coastal towns also offer halibut and salmon charters, while freshwater lakes and streams provide opportunities for hooking feisty trout. There are also endless opportunities for fishing fresh water, salt water, rivers or lakes without a guide or charter. Salmon and halibut are the most popular species in the region.

Annual Fishing Events

Alaska is already known for world-class fishing – but for those who are looking to show off their lucky catch, there are numerous fishing derbies around the state that pay big bucks to the angler who catches the biggest fish, or just happens to catch tagged fish or fish closest to weekly “target weights” set by derby organizers. Below are a handful of derbies that happen annually around the state:

Anchorage Slam’n Salm’n Derby

www.shipcreeksalmonderby.com

Homer Jackpot Halibut Derby

www.homerhalibutderby.com

Juneau Spring King Salmon Derby

www.springkingderby.org

Kodiak Silver Salmon Derby

www.kodiak.org

Sitka Salmon Derby

www.sitka.org

Seward Silver Salmon Derby / Seward Jackpot Halibut Tournament

www.sewardak.org

Valdez Fish Derbies

www.valdezfishderbies.com

If You Go

Alaska Travel Industry Association

www.travelalaska.com/Media%20Center

Phone: (800) 327-9372

Anchorage Convention & Visitors Bureau

www.anchorage.net

Phone: (907) 276-4118

Alaska Department of Fish and Game Sport Fish Division

www.sf.adfg.state.ak.us

Phone: (907) 465-4180

Homer Chamber of Commerce

www.homer.alaska.org

Phone: (907) 235-7740

Juneau Convention & Visitors Bureau

www.traveljuneau.com

Phone: (888) 581-2201

Kenai Peninsula Tourism Marketing Council

www.kenaipeninsula.org

Phone: (800) 535-3624

Kodiak Island Convention & Visitors Bureau

www.kodiak.org

Phone: (800) 789-4782

Nome Convention & Visitors Bureau

www.visitnomealaska.com

Phone: (907) 443-6624

Sitka Convention & Visitors Bureau

www.sitka.org

Phone: (800) 557-4852

Seward Chamber of Commerce

www.seward.com

Phone: (907) 224-8051

Valdez Convention & Visitors Bureau

www.valdezalaska.org

Phone: (907) 835-4636