

GENERAL INFORMATION

Standard Fishing Season... Year 'Round Opportunities

Streams open the third Saturday in May through November 30. Some streams have extended white-fish and catch-and-release fishing for trout from December through the third Saturday in May.

Lakes are open the entire year, with some exceptions. Be sure to check the regulations for the particular lake you'll be fishing.

Licenses and Regulations

Fishing licenses are available at most sporting goods stores, marinas and some convenience stores. All nonresidents 15 years and older must have a fishing license. (A license is not needed for fishing within Glacier National Park). No nonresident under the age of 15 may fish in Montana without having first obtained a fishing license unless the nonresident child is in the company of an adult in possession of a valid fishing license. The limit of fish for the nonresident child and accompanying adult must not exceed the limit for one adult. A nonresident of any age may purchase a nonresident fishing license and be entitled to take a legal limit of fish.

For information on fishing:

Glacier National Park
406-888-7800

Flathead Indian Reservation
406-675-2700

Safety First

In Montana our weather and the conditions on our lakes and streams can change quickly. A safe river one day can be very dangerous the next. And, great fishing is more likely if you're in the right spot. Ask at the local sporting goods stores, ranger stations and Fish, Wildlife & Parks. Forest maps and a map of the three forks of the Flathead River are available from the U.S. Forest Service at most ranger stations.

Fishing, like any sport, entails some risk. Always be aware of your own physical limits, practice caution, seek local advice, carry necessary survival gear and tell others where you're going and when you'll return.

Conserve Native Fish

Native Westslope Cutthroat and Bull Trout have declined in distribution and abundance. It is illegal to fish for or keep Bull Trout except in Swan Lake or with a Bull Trout catch card. Catch and release or low limits required for Cutthroat in most streams and some lakes. Check the Montana fishing regulations for a species identification guide.

Catch & Release

A great fish deserves to be caught more than once!

While it's wonderful to eat fresh trout caught only moments earlier, we ask you to help preserve Montana's fishing opportunities and wildlife by following regulations and keeping only those fish that you will eat. Tips for successful release of fish:

1. Use artificial lures to reduce wounding of fish.
2. Use single, barbless hooks.
3. Play the fish rapidly - not to exhaustion.
4. Keep the fish in the water as much as possible.
5. Hold the fish horizontally with both hands.
6. Do not squeeze the fish or its gills.
7. If deeply hooked, cut the line and leave the hook.
8. Hold the fish upright facing upstream until it can swim.
9. Release the fish in quiet water where it was hooked.

Tips for Successful Fishing

Lake Trout: Troll T-50 flatfish with steel line or downriggers; jig with white or chartreuse jigs tipped with fish meat.

Westslope Cutthroat: Use flies such as Adams, Stimulator, Royal Wulff, Elkhair Caddis, Hares Ear or Black Ant. Live bait: worms, salmon eggs or grasshoppers.

Rainbow Trout: Use flies (above) or small silver spinner and lures, worms, salmon eggs, corn or grasshoppers.

Kokanee: Troll Cowbells with florescent red spinners or lures on lead core line or jig small red lures or jigs.

Largemouth Bass: Use a variety of plastic worms or grubs, spinner baits and crank baits.

Yellow Perch: Use small chartreuse jig tipped with fish meat or maggots.



While there are many opportunities to take off on your own and enjoy fishing in the Flathead Valley, many of our visitors prefer to go with an expert. A professional guide can make your fishing more enjoyable, more productive and safer.

For more information on the area and a list of member guides:

Flathead Convention and Visitor Bureau

4170 US Hwy 2 East #14

Kalispell, MT 59901

800-543-3105 or (406) 756-9091

FAX (406) 257-2500

www.montanasflatheadvalley.com

For more information on fishing, regulations, species lists, stocking lists, and information sources in Northwest Montana, contact:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

490 North Meridian Road

Kalispell, MT 59901

(406) 752-5501

www.fwp.mt.gov

For area maps, Forest Service campgrounds and river float maps, contact:

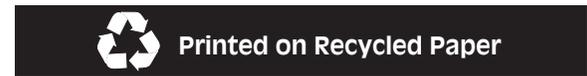
Flathead National Forest

1935 3rd Avenue East

Kalispell, MT 59901

(406) 758-5204

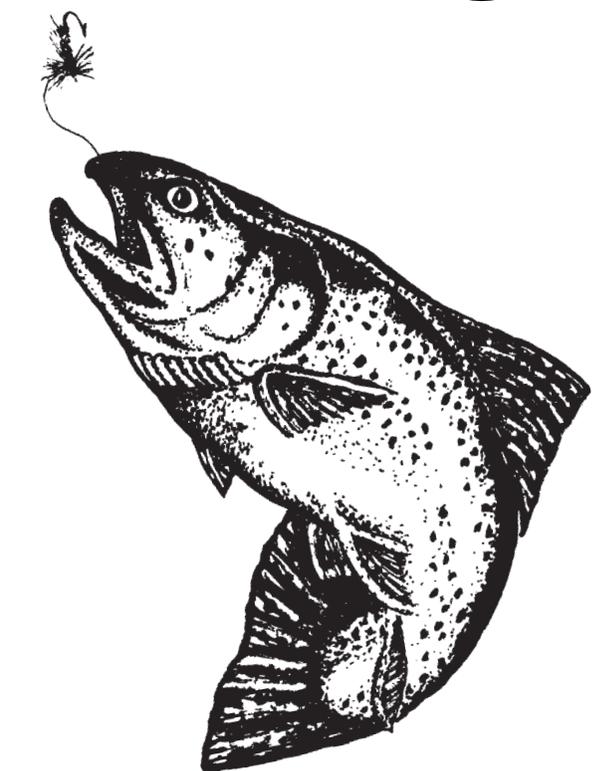
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FISHING

Montana's

Flathead Valley



Fly fish the Flathead Wild & Scenic River System. Troll the depths of the largest natural lake west of the Mississippi. Explore the hidden quarries for Large-mouth Bass. Adventure to scenic high mountain lakes. Challenge the unknown for Northern Pike, Mountain Whitefish or Perch. Montana's Flathead Valley provides a wide range of enjoyment for any angler, whether it's your first time or you're an expert.



Lakes

1. Flathead Lake LT, LWF, YP

Year-round

There are a number of state parks and fishing access sites as well as private marinas, all accessible from Highways 93 or 35. Somers, Woods Bay, Bigfork and Walstad accesses, and the five state parks have boat launches. There is a small fee at the state parks for day use or camping. Many are handicapped accessible. A tribal fishing permit is required for the southern half of Flathead Lake.

2. Swan Lake KOK, RB, WCT, BT, NP, YP

May-October

Drive southeast from Kalispell on the Swan Highway (83). Swan Lake has a good boat launch with a small day use fee. Little shore fishing access. Ice fishing is not recommended.

3. Lake Mary Ronan RB, WCT, KOK, LMB, YP

Year-round

Drive south on Highway 93 from Kalispell to Dayton. Turn at the blinking light (there is a sign to Lake Mary Ronan). Launch at the state park and several private marinas. Boating and floating are good. Limited shore access. Ice fishing is good. Take note of special regulations for this lake.

4. Little Bitterroot Lake KOK, RT

May-August and January-March

Drive west on Highway 2 toward Marion. Turn north on FSR 538 and drive six miles to the lake. Boat launching can be difficult. The best access is the county ramp (not marked) in the northwest corner of the lake. Good ice fishing. Limited shore access.

5. Whitefish Lake LT, LWF, WCT, NP

January-February and May-September

Take Highway 93 north of Whitefish. Just past Whitefish Golf Course, turn north at lake access sign. The state park and city beach have boat ramps, but there is limited shore access. Ice fishing can be excellent, but is sometimes dangerous - watch conditions carefully.

6. Beaver/Little Beaver Lakes (five lakes) RB, KOK, WCT

April-May and late December-March

Off Highway 93 six miles north of Whitefish turn north onto Beaver Lake Rd. at milepost 135. Follow signs to lake. Maintained gravel road. These lakes have good floating, good shoreline access and ice fishing. Recommended for children and inexperienced anglers. Carry-on boats only at most lakes.

8. Echo Lake LMB, NP, YP, SF
April-June and September-October
Take Hwy 83 five miles north and east of Bigfork. Turn north on Echo Lake Road. Launch at county ramp at Echo Lake Marina. There is limited parking, poor shore access. Echo Lake is one of the best lakes for largemouth bass.

7. Lion Lake RB, WCT

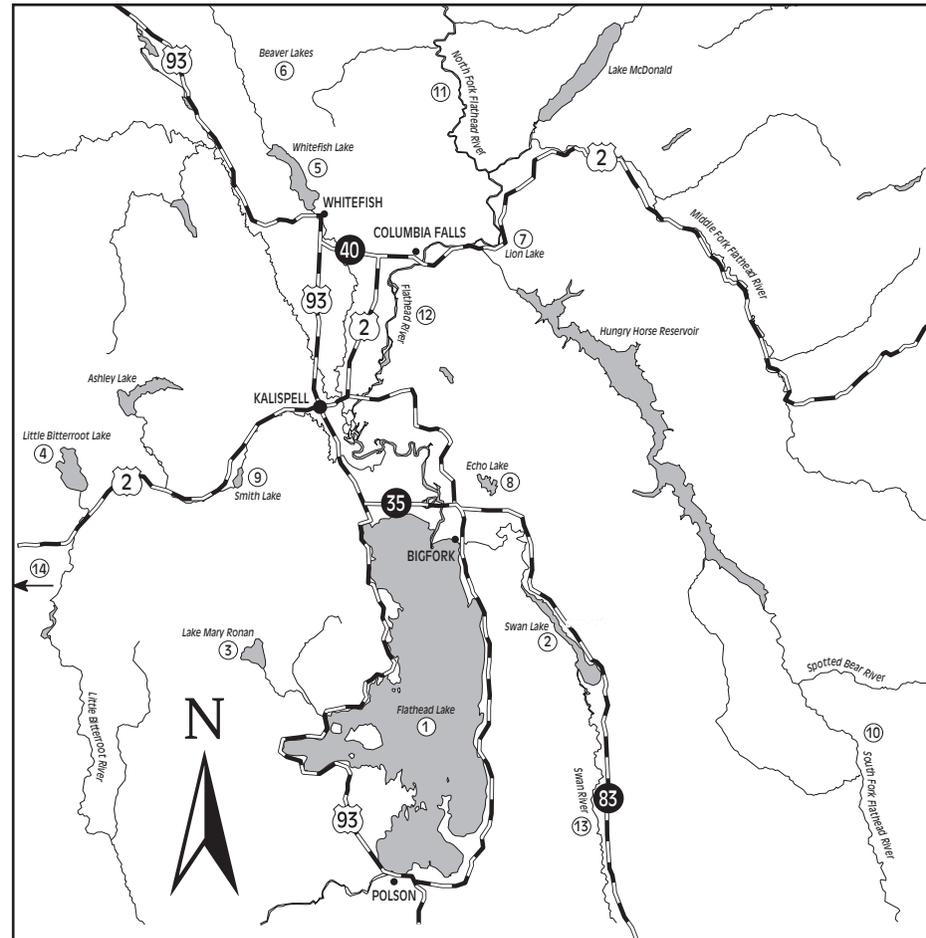
Year-round

From Highway 2 turn onto Hungry Horse Dam Road (FSR 895). Lake is about 3 miles from Hungry Horse. This lake is handicapped accessible, has good shoreline access and is suitable for children and inexperienced anglers. Carry-on boats are recommended. Ice fishing is good.

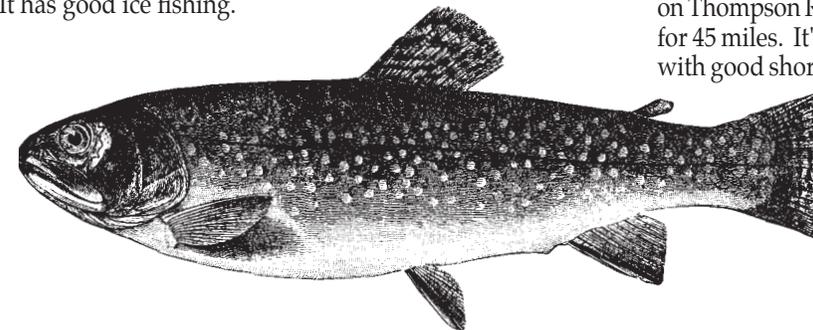
9. Smith Lake YP, NP

December-January and August-October

The lake is ten miles west of Kalispell on Highway 2 (Follow signs to fishing access). There is a gravel ramp, handicapped access with dock and limited shore fishing. The lake is good for children and inexperienced anglers. It has good ice fishing.



Fish Key: BT=Bull Trout; LWF=Lake Whitefish; KOK=Kokanee; LMB=Large Mouth Bass; MWF=Mountain Whitefish; NP=Northern Pike; RB=Rainbow Trout; WCT=Westslope Cutthroat; LT=Lake Trout (Mackinaw); YP=Yellow Perch; SF=Sunfish; EBT=Eastern Brook Trout



Streams

10. South Fork of the Flathead WCT, MWF

Late June-September

From Martin City, take FSR 38 to Spotted Bear (55 miles of maintained gravel road). Fishing is good in any water above the reservoir. Good floating below the Meadow Creek Gorge. A recommended float is from Harrison Creek to Spotted Bear. There are special regulations for the area. Inquire at the Spotted Bear Ranger Station.

11. North Fork of the Flathead WCT, MWF

Late June-September

From Columbia Falls, take the North Fork Road (FSR 486). There is good shore access and floating from Polebridge to Glacier Rim. Obtain a forest service float map at Glacier View Ranger Station in Columbia Falls as there are some river hazards.

12. Main Flathead River WCT, MWF, RB, LWF,LT

Late June-October

There is good fishing and floating on the river from Columbia Falls to Kalispell. Shore and floater access is good at Teakettle (one mile east of Columbia Falls on Hwy 2), Presentine (6 miles north of Kalispell on Hwy 2 near Glacier Park International Airport), and Old Steel Bridge (one mile east of Kalispell on Conrad Drive) accesses.

13. Swan River WCT, RB

Late June-September

Drive south from Bigfork on Highway 83. Turn on FSR 888 to Salmon Prairie. Float from Salmon Prairie to Pt. Pleasant. This is an excellent, but difficult, float (log jams) recommended only for experienced floaters or with guides. There is poor stream access and difficult wading.

14. Thompson River RB, EBT

May-October

Fifty miles west of Kalispell on Highway 2, turn south on Thompson River Road. The road parallels the stream for 45 miles. It's a small river, not good for floating, but with good shore access. Recommended for children and inexperienced anglers.