



Faraway Fisheries *The Emerald Isle*

More than 14,000 kilometres of rivers feed the 4,000 lakes that are home to brown trout, salmon, sea trout and pike – our target species.

Ireland is recognized for its outstanding angling opportunities due to the vast variety and quality of fishing available there. Approximately 550 kilometres in length and about 300 kilometres wide, there are thousands of fish-rich lakes and rivers offering golden opportunities to anglers.

Europe's Land of Lakes

Text and Photographs by Ferrario Roberto



God must have smiled benignly on Ireland because he obviously catered to the needs of sport fishing when designing the weather and climate. Moderate summers, mild winters and adequate yearly rainfall, Ireland's climate is always temperate and kind to the angler. The warm waters of the North Atlantic drift south and west, resulting in a milder climate than one would expect from its geographical location. The result is a fabulous mixture of cold and warm water fish species capable of exciting even the most hardcore fishing enthusiast.

There are 3.5 million inhabitants in Ireland of which, only a few are fishing enthusiasts. So the pressure of fishing in rivers and lakes is very low.

Here, the most appreciated species are salmon and trout (brown, sea and rainbow). Only in rare cases, Irish fishermen target the pike. There are lakes and rivers where these pike have never seen a Rapala or any other artificial lures. So it is not surprising that we see a lot of good-sized pike which aren't too suspicious and very aggressive when attacking lures.

These waters are also inhabited by great quantities of coarse fish such as bream, tench, perch, roach, and rudd. Therefore it is not surprising that the predatory fish grow and reproduce more quickly than in any other country in the world.

Some years ago, the Irish authorities forbade the killing of pike consequently, it isn't too rare to catch a trophy pike in a week of fishing. Along every course of water, there are signs indicating the name of the river and the different species of fish one can find there. Special passages and steps have been created from the main roads to facilitate easy access to the banks.

In Ireland, the practice of catch and release of trout and salmon is strongly encouraged and all specimens under 40 centimeters are released, as well as those, which are too large to be consumed.

Pike year round

Irish Pike can be fished for throughout the year but March - being the post-spawning period - is the most productive because that is when they are the most aggressive. They can be found in lakes

their counterparts in other countries.

One of the most beautiful of all European fresh water fish is the perch. Although they do not grow to anything like the size of pike, they will give great sport on light tackle. Irish perch often exceed 1.5 kilogram.

The Irish record for pike is about 33 kilograms. Every year, several fish over 25 kilograms are caught. The number of bites is also very high, about 10-15 pikes per person especially during the spring months. But as every fisherman will agree, not all fish are constantly aggressive and active, therefore you can alternate very good days with moments of slow activity.

Our guide assured us that pike of around 10 kilograms are very common, either in lakes or rivers. The Irish record for pike captures in a single day is currently a memorable session on the river Sock where 5 lucky fishermen caught 104 pike from 2 to 8 kilograms. Several times on this river, 40-60 fish have been caught in a day.

On our best day in Ireland, we had about 40 strikes and landed and released 25 pike into Lake Darravaragh.

All techniques of fishing are allowed except live baiting, which is rigorously forbidden all over the country. Fishing with more than one rod per person is not allowed either.

Techniques like spin fishing or fly-fishing give good results, either from the boat or from the shore. The recommended tackle for spin fishing is a rod of medium power able to cast a lure from 20 to 35 grams linked with a proportionate reel spooled with a 12-16 lb. line. You must always be ready for the eventuality of hooking a big pike.

If you enjoy fishing with light tackle, a rod that can cast a weight from 5-12 grams with a reel spooled with 6-10 lb.



and rivers and they move in great numbers.

The winter months aren't to be excluded for big pike - particularly when fishing with dead bait - a small rudd is always productive.

In winter, the minimum air temperature is around 6-8 degrees, so all the fish will move to the deeper waters of the lake to stay active and not decrease their metabolism rate unlike



line will surely provide long and exciting fighting sessions with small and medium size Irish pike.

The lures that gave us the most satisfaction were the infallible Rapala "Husky Jerk" and the classic Rapala "Countdown" from 8 to 14 centimeters. The colours that we used were the gray-silver (S), trout (RT), and vampire (V). During cloudy days, lighter colours like orange (GFR) and yellow-green (FT) were used. In zones particularly rich in aquatic vegetation, we had good results with the Minnow Spoon Rapala of 6 and 7 centimeters. Just as effective were the big silver spoons and big spinner baits.

With regard to fly fishing, you need a 7' or 8' rod with a reel that can contain a 7# floating tip and 100 meters of 15 lb. backing. Big streamers with hooks varying from 1/0 to 4/0, linked with a short steel leader will complete the tackle. Usually, it is not necessary to fix a sinker on the hook or the sinking tip because in rivers and lakes, you normally fish in shallow waters and the strike will be immediate when you start to move your streamer.

Unfortunately, the big uncertainty when you go fishing in north European

countries is the weather. It can change several times during the day and especially in Ireland. It passes from sun to rain, from mild temperatures to cold winds within a very short time. It is for this reason that you must be adequately equipped to be ready for the various weather conditions that you may encounter during the day.

Mulligar and Westmeath County

My friends and I chose the county of Westmeath where there are more than 50 lakes, some of which are from 5 to 10 kilometers long. In fact, this zone is named "lakeland." There are also hundreds of rivers and channels that are home to a great variety of fish – in particular the pike.

Our base was the small town of Mulligar, which is only a one-hour drive from Dublin, the capital of Ireland. We relied on Carlo Rizzini, an Italian fishing enthusiast that has been living in Ireland for several years. He provided us with all the locations and furnished us with all the licenses and permits and gave us one of the best Irish guides for pike fishing.

Because of the strong winds and

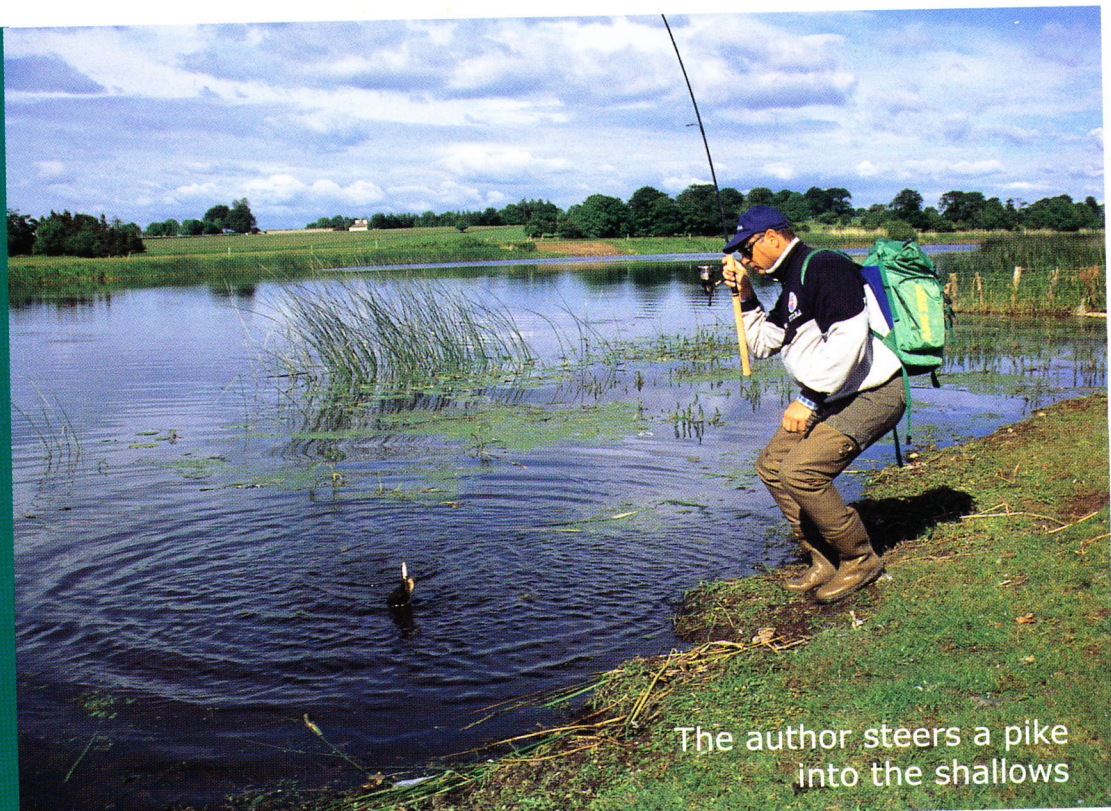
rough waters of the lakes that dominated our holiday, we dedicated ourselves to spin fishing almost exclusively. Everyday, we moved to different spots, all offering stunning scenery – lush green meadows, wonderful aquatic vegetation and incredibly clear blue skies created a wonderful ambience.

The fishing started at 9 a.m. and ended at 6.30p.m everyday. At the end of each day, we were so exhausted as we had walked the banks of rivers and small lakes for several kilometres, while performing hundreds and hundreds of casts.

We explored the waters of the Inny River, the fabulous River Sock, Ennell Lake, Derravaragh Lake and several other small rivers, always with excellent results.

The ambience and landscape of this county and probably the whole of Ireland are surely some of the finest in Europe. Passionate fishermen will appreciate the strange climate, the always cordial Irishmen, the wonderful waters, the cattle and sheep that are present everywhere and lastly, the quality of fishing.

In Ireland, the practice of catch and release of trout and salmon is strongly encouraged and all specimens under 40 centimeters are released, as well as those, which are too large to be consumed.



The author steers a pike into the shallows



Due to the catch and release policy in Ireland, pike of this size are plentiful



An exquisite fly-caught Irish Brown Trout



Irish Salmonides

Irish waters are mainly famous for the abundant salmonides that populate hundreds of rivers and lakes. These waters are subject to particular attention and are governed by strict fishing regulations.

The most researched fish is surely the Atlantic salmon that lives in almost all the rivers that flow into the sea.

The beginning of spring sees the first run of salmon, which are usually up to 6 kilograms. From the end of May to the first week of June, the juvenile salmon, called 'grilse' will normally arrive and dominate the rivers for all the season.

It is generally possible to fish throughout the whole season but a careful eye should be kept on rainfall, as heavily flooded rivers are virtually unfishable. When the conditions are perfect, seven or eight salmon per rod per day is not considered exceptional. Local fishermen who know the waters well - can often double this number.

Irish salmon average 5.5 kilograms with few fish from 8 to 13 kilograms. One of the most famous and productive rivers

for salmon is the Moy.

Sea Trout

Due to their exceptional fighting characteristics, Irish sea trout are eagerly targeted by discerning anglers. A sea trout of 2 kilograms can spool up to 50 metres from your reel in a few moments.

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Brown Trout

Another gamefish that populates Irish waters is the brown trout. It can be found everywhere in the territory, particularly in the lakes of the west - Corrib, Mask, Conn and Baltra. Here, the trout can reach easily weights of over 4 kilograms. I have heard some stories of trout of around 10 kilograms being caught.

Rainbow Trout

The rainbow trout is an introduced

species but is breeding and thriving throughout Ireland. Another powerful fly designed to thrill anglers - especially fly tackle.

Seasons

The season for salmon fishing starts 1 February and the season for brown trout is 15 February until 30 September.

Fishing Permits/licenses

In Ireland, the cost of a fishing permit for a day of salmon or sea trout fishing can be quite expensive - around 20 to 70 Irish pounds per rod. The permit for brown and rainbow trout is less expensive and varies from 15 to 25 pounds. In some areas you can also find several lakes and rivers where the fishing is free.

The fishing permit must not be confused with the government license. This is granted and collected by the Irish staff whilst the fishing permit is paid to the owner's reserve.

For salmon and trout fishing, it is necessary to purchase a government fishing license, which is available from most fishing shops.



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Useful Information

Documents You will need a passport or, if you live in a UE country, you will need an identity card.

Currency Irish pound - UK pound

Language Official language is English

Climate the Gulf stream influences the Irish climate and for this reason, it is rarely very cold. July and August are the hottest months with temperatures that can reach a maximum of 25 degrees C. Rain may be a problem (the average is about 250 days of rain in a year) but long rains are rare and the sun will always shine after a good Irish storm.

For information

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