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&
HERS**

**Alaska Tourism 101
eBook Series**



FISHING

IN ALASKA



SO YOU ACTUALLY WANT TO CATCH FISH IN ALASKA

My name is Ben and I'm a lifelong angler who made a career change in 2006 to learn the art of being a fishing guide on the Alagnak River in the Alaskan bush. The following winter I earned my United States Coast Guard Merchant Marine License, allowing me to transport paying customers on the rivers and near coastal waters. My first summer in Alaska was spent guiding clients for king and silver salmon on the rivers of the Mat-Su Valley. The following winter we made the big leap and moved to Seward, Alaska. In the summer of 2008, I started guiding on the Gulf of Alaska for salmon, halibut, ling cod, rockfish and just about anything else that would bite a hook. Alaska is a great place to be a fishing guide, there are fish to be caught and they can be quite large which makes me look like a hero.

The decision to stop guiding was tough because fishing was and still is my passion, but the lifestyle is all consuming. In the Alaskan summer everything comes to life, man and nature work nonstop to prepare for the looming winter. I would literally check out of life and into fishing for 4 months every year. This is not healthy nor is it the lifestyle we always dreamed of. Rebecca would regularly say, "There are a lot of other things to do in Alaska, aside from fishing here in Seward."

In the spring of 2011, we sought to find balance between my fishing, Rebecca's job / village travel, businesses and personal lives. This is also the time period when a RV entered our lives. Initially purchased to save money on hotel rooms for our business trips to Anchorage, it took no time before we started exploring Alaska in our motorhome. The balance was found working part time for our friend Jim on his boat the *Swelltime*. This was a win - win situation for a couple years, running fishing charters and Alaska RV fishing explorations.

Slowly and steadily in the background of our lives we had been working towards gaining location independence. We started embracing our newly earned independence and I ended my professional fishing career to resume fishing recreationally. Traveling around Alaska most of the summer, our class A motorhome allowed me to pluck away on the seemingly endless fishing opportunities. That being said, Alaska is larger than you can even fathom and it is impossible to know everything about every fishery. We are all a sum of our life experiences and I've had the honor of working alongside some of the greatest fishing guides in Alaska. My objective for this article is to greatly increase your odds of catching fish.

REALITIES YOU NEED TO ACCEPT

If you want to catch fish in Alaska...

You have to make fishing a priority, it may involve back-tracking and bouncing around the state. The fish will not work around your schedule.

Fishing in Alaska, if done well, results in bringing home a lot of meat. It's not unusual to walk away with 10 to 30 pounds of fillets from a good fishing trip. Be prepared to handle yourself and the meat. If the fishing is hot, exercise self-restraint and stop fishing if you are not prepared to handle your catch. Catch and release fishing is possible, but not always ideal because it hurts the fish if not done right. The last thing you want to do is dishonor the fish by letting it go to waste, and under extreme circumstances wanton waste of wild fish and game is illegal.

Be prepared to spend money. Yes, fishing in Alaska can be done on the cheap, but there are still expenses such as licenses. There are also going to be the inevitable tackle and gear purchases.

Know the rules and regulations. Every region and every watershed can have a different set of rules. They can be complex and intimidating. Fortunately there are summaries of the rules online and local merchants who sell licenses will have the paper summary books. It is very easy to accidentally break a rule or go over limit. Be prepared. The easiest rule to accidentally break is retaining a snagged fish. In many areas, specifically salt water, snagging is legal and a tried and true catching technique, but in most rivers it is illegal. The easiest way to not break this rule is to release any fish that was not hooked in the mouth. Yes, there are that many fish in Alaska - simply running a hook through the water catches one.

You cannot fish the way we do! Alaska is very generous to its residents; in certain fisheries, we are allowed higher limits and the use of techniques not allowed in traditional sport fishing. I am referencing dip netting for salmon, which you will see on the lower stretches of the Kenai/Kasilof Rivers and the Copper River in Chitina. Be advised some Alaskan residents are allowed to exceed their daily sport caught limit if they have a proxy, allowing them to catch fish for a friend or family member who is physically unable to go fishing any more.

Some fisheries can be very crowded, hence the term "combat fishing." There are times when hundreds of people crowd shoulder to shoulder on shorelines trying to catch a piece of the action. Combat fishing is messy, the volume of people in close proximity combined with folks who take it way too seriously is not my idea of a good time. Now if the fishing is on fire, and I can get in and out with a quick limit of fish, you might see me there.

There is a big difference between commercial and sport fishing. Commercial fishing is allowed the use of techniques that catch large volumes of fish intended to go to market. Sport fishing is for personal use and the fish cannot be sold. If you are railing the fish and someone asks you if they can buy one off of you, that is a committing a crime.

Just remember sport-caught fish cannot be sold.



THREE TYPES OF FISHING IN ALASKA - CORE FUNDAMENTALS

SALMON RUNS

Salmon are either present or not present, meaning they are a migratory fish on a vast journey. Fortunately for us, they can be intercepted - offering opportunities for catching. This means you must go to the fish, when the fish are there. This is equally applicable information for fresh and salt water. History has given us ranges of dates and locations when salmon will be passing through areas, but keep in mind a single interruption in their life cycle can completely throw off the entire run for one or more years. If trying to schedule things, keep in mind nothing is set in stone; sometimes runs are weak - sometimes strong, sometime runs are early - sometimes late, water levels can be too low or too high. Allow for flexibility because the fish work off their schedule not yours.

DEEP SEA

The ocean is very abundant in Alaska and it's a crime not to get on the open water for a day of fishing when visiting. The numerous species of fish, larger size and increased retention limits when compared to fresh water, make ocean fishing very appealing. Aside from some exceptional cases, this is the only way you are going to catch a halibut or ling cod. Ocean fishing requires a worthy boat and is one of those times when you should consider spending money on a charter. Remember all fishing tackle is provide by the charter so you don't need to lug around all that gear.

You do have the option of befriending a local. Alaskans are very kind and love sharing their state with others, so this is a plausible situation. Being a former guide and captain, I take safety very seriously and want you to know it is very easy to die on the water in Alaska. Before accepting the offer, you need to find out some critical information.

What kind of boat are you going on? Is it seaworthy? Are there two VHF radios? Is there radar in case it gets foggy? How many life vests are on board? What's the weather forecast? Many questions like these can be easily answered visually, but do not be afraid to ask - your life may depend on it.

My final thought for deep sea fishing has to be about motion sickness. It is a horrible feeling that does not go away until you reach terra firma again. Charter boats are not going to turn around if you get seasick. You are stuck for the entire 10+ hour day rocking and bobbing back and forth, back and forth, back and forth. Being a former guide, I've seen plenty of seasick clients and the "best of the worst" story I have is the person who was puking over the rail and simultaneously soiled their pants.

You don't know if you get seasick?

Prevention is the best way to avoid this horrible feeling. There are prescription and over the counter products, when taken the night before and day of, can be very effective. Any pill or remedy taken out on the water after



you are sick will be ineffective and not with you for long.

LAKES AND CREEKS

Small lakes and creeks are abundant in Alaska and probably the easiest opportunity to wet a line when traveling around the state. Many campgrounds are built on lakes stocked with trout by Alaska Department of Fish and Game. Dolly varden are a beautiful little fish found in the lakes of Southcentral Alaska and, as you head inland, arctic grayling become abundant. For those in search of something larger to catch, the toothy invasive species called northern pike lurk in shallow grassy waters. Alaska is also home to trophy size lake trout, but they are primarily found in the larger lakes. To sum things up, if you have a kayak, bring it because there are countless lakes waiting to be fished.

GEAR

The Alaskan summer landscape is lush and green; the rivers flow wild and grand because it rains a lot and the temperatures are generally cooler. Alaska is an extreme environment and the proper gear will make all the difference in comfort and success. Quality boots like XtraTufs will keep your feet dry in day to day life and on fishing boats. A breathable waterproof jacket is mandatory and, while you are at it, get some rain pants as well because if it's pouring down rain and there's a river plugged with salmon, you want to stay dry. If you are serious about fishing, breathable chest waders are mandatory. Enough said.

Regarding fishing tackle, I recommend bringing a light action spinning rod with 4- to 6-pound test and a medium-heavy spinning rod with a 25+ pound braided line. Pack a variety of small trout lures and terminal tackle as needed. There will be some small items you can pick up here and there as

necessary. As I mentioned earlier if you have a kayak it will greatly increase your fishing opportunities. If you enjoy fly fishing or fishing with open faced reels, you probably already know what you need to bring; so I'll see you on the water.

LICENSES

Just like any other state, you need a license to fish in Alaska, residents and visitors alike.

Licenses can be purchased from local merchants or online, just make sure you sign the license after printing. Prices and duration are available on the [Alaska Department of Fish and Game website](#).

If you want to target king salmon and/or retain a king salmon that was caught while fishing for another species, you need to buy a king stamp. They are a pricey stamp and probably not necessary unless you are targeting kings.

TECHNIQUES

There are a lot of unique fishing methods used in Alaska, some may seem unconventional. Snagging is a technique commonly used when fishing for salmon from shore in the saltwater fisheries of Alaska. When the fish are present, snagging is very effective and quickly fills the



freezer with food for the winter. In the rivers, it is necessary to hook salmon in the mouth in order to be a legal catch. A common method used is called flossing where your fishing line runs through the salmon's mouth as it is facing upriver. Don't worry, it's not as complicated as it sounds.

In some fisheries, salmon eggs are allowed to be used as bait. The reason for their effectiveness is often disputed because salmon stop eating upon re-entering fresh water. One theory says it's a competitive trait and a "survival of the fittest" behavior. Another theory says it's a nurturing trait and a "survival of the species" behavior. Either way, if you are new to Alaska you are going to see and experience many new fisheries and styles.

PROCESSING

You must be prepared to preserve your catch. I cannot emphasize this enough! One successful day on the ocean can easily yield over 30 pounds of fillets. Fishing charters include fish cleaning, but you are responsible for preservation. Traditionally, this will involve a processor that will vacuum pack and freeze the fillets. Are you prepared to keep the fillets frozen? Not too many people have chest freezers in their RVs, but we know a couple die-hards who do!

Another option comes at a premium price and that is shipping the meat to a friend or family member who can store it for you. Professionally packaged fish will taste amazing for years so you will have plenty of time to enjoy your catch. Make sure to choose a person who you trust not to eat all your meat.

Please consider catch and release as an option, especially for trophy fish. Most species of fish that you would catch on a charter can be released unharmed. You are also allowed to be nice and give people the fish that you catch, most Alaskans would happily accept that gift. There can be no exchange of money and a form may need to be filled out. Check current regulations.

BEN'S FAVORITE FISHERIES

If you fly to Alaska, you can also take the fish with you as checked luggage. They have special fish boxes and if you put ice packs in the cooler and seal then lid with tape, your fish will stay frozen for up to 24 hours.

I wish I could say I was unbiased, but I'm not. When it comes to fishing everyone has different viewpoints, but I promise not to steer you in the wrong direction with these recommendations.

SNAGGING REDS IN SEWARD

I am openly biased here. This fishery is 10 minutes from my front door and has fed us hundreds of meals over the years. Towards the end of May and beginning of June Red Salmon return to Resurrection Bay. This is a snagging fishery below the high tide line and the daily limit is six fish per person. It doesn't take many successful fishing trips before you have a freezer full of meat. Commonly fished in two locations: the beach near Spring Creek or Mt Alice Boat Harbor at the head of the bay. I much prefer the Mt Alice Boat Harbor because you are fishing the tidal wetlands and have room to spread out.

REDS IN THE COPPER RIVER VALLEY

Yes, Reds from the Copper River taste better and you will find a fraction of the people fishing for them when compared to the Kenai and Russian. It is for those two reasons that I recommend this general area for flossing Reds. It's an entire valley and river drainage so there are plenty of rivers and locations to fish. For reference, use the Copper Center area as a base camp for this fishery.

DEEP SEA FISHING IN SEWARD

Another biased recommendation from Captain Ben. As an all-around fishery I feel Resurrection Bay and the Gulf of Alaska outside of Seward offer the most diverse fishing experience in south-central

Alaska. Halibut, ling cod, rockfish, salmon, we have it all here in Seward. The one downside to Seward is you are fishing the open ocean and, if there's some weather present, the water can get big, resulting in cancelled charters or a bouncy day on the water.

TANGLE LAKES ON THE DENALI HIGHWAY

This is our end of summer relaxation and caribou hunting grounds. There is nothing more beautiful than the Denali Highway in autumn and the fishing will not disappoint you either. Tangle Lakes BLM campground located right on the water offers creek and lake fishing for arctic grayling. This aggressive little fish has the most beautiful dorsal fin and are a lot of fun to catch. While you are there take to the hills for blueberries and cranberries.

CLAM DIGGING IN COOK INLET

Since you are not allowed to dig for clams on the road system anymore, you have to take a boat across Cook Inlet to Polly Creek. This one of a kind experience starts when a tractor launches the boat off the beach for a 20+ mile run across the inlet. Upon arrival, you literally drop anchor and wait. You are waiting for the tide to fall which exposes the clam beds. This also grounds the boat and you are not going anywhere until the tide returns in a few hours. Digging clams is a lot of fun and there is nothing better than a clam fry at the end of a long day.

ABSOLUTE DO'S AND DON'TS

Don't walk around in your brand new shiny XtraTufs. I applaud you for getting proper footwear, but do the boots a favor and get them dirty - preferably through fishing or hard work.

Do wear your wader belt if using chest waders. If you fall in the drink your odds of survival go down dramatically without a wader belt.

Don't match your spouse. This is so painful to see. Brand new blue jeans and matching North Face jackets are just painful to look at, sorry.

Do wear life preservers. Use your best judgement. If the situation is in any way dangerous or questionable, put on the life preserver. You may know how to swim, but I don't know anyone who can swim while unconscious.

Don't let your spouse not go fishing. Alaska is an experience best enjoyed together and the perfect spot to learn and even get hooked on fishing.

Don't skimp on rain gear. The clear 99-cent rain poncho makes you look like a walking contraceptive. Just be prepared for the elements.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

I am well-traveled and no place fishes like Alaska. It will ruin you for fishing anywhere else!



Fishing For King Salmon On The Little Susitna River

Alaska king salmon are a prized catch among anglers and the Little Susitna River in the Mat-Su Valley is our destination to try to catch one. We are taking a fishing charter that conveniently starts from the [Little Susitna Public Use Area](#) [also known as Burma Landing] where there is a boat launch with a nice little campground for our motorhome.

Unfortunately, king salmon numbers are not as strong as they once were, making the prize even greater. I have always wanted to return to the Little Susitna River, back in 2007 I guided anglers there to catching their own king salmon. Did you know that I have never reeled in a king salmon myself? It may sound ironic, especially since I was an Alaska fishing guide for years. Surprisingly, there are many captains and guides that never get to go fishing on their own.

The [last 5 miles to Burma Landing](#) will make everything in your motorhome rattle. It's the type of gravel road that's intolerable at 10 mph, but smooths out when you reach 40 mph, be careful not to lose control by going too fast. We pulled into our campsite the evening before our fishing trip. Conveniently, there is a short walkway from the campground down to the launch ramp. We set up camp and had a relaxing evening, watching DVD episodes of [Entourage](#).

Bright and early the following morning [5 am and another reason we camped there the night before] we meet our friend Ray from [Fisherman's Choice](#) at the launch ramp. Back in 2007, I spent a summer working for Ray, he taught me how to catch salmon on the rivers in the [Mat-Su Valley](#).

The lower stretches of the [Little Su River](#) slowly meander through the woods until it reaches Cook Inlet. The technique of choice for catching king salmon here is back trolling plugs through one of Ray's many fishing holes. Back trolling is accomplished by pointing the bow of the boat up river and slowing the drift of boat (with oars or a small motor) just enough to slowly back KwikFish Plugs through the fishing holes.



Ray precisely backs the boat through the fishing holes and does a great job of avoiding the countless submerged snags. He can do this because he's been fishing in the Valley for over 30 years and is one of the best fishing guides around.

Our boat mates were four Naval Aviators from Texas. They were visiting Alaska to participate in [Northern Edge](#), a joint military training exercise that takes place in the Gulf of Alaska. We always enjoy fishing with those who dedicate their life to protecting our country, every year in Seward we participate in the [Combat Fishing Tournament](#) by taking soldiers out fishing.

On this random day the fishing was great, but the catching was a little slow. Ray backed us through over a dozen holes in hopes of finding the mighty kings. From past experiences, I knew the Little Su usually produces quality fish over quantity of fish and catching 6 kings for 6 anglers was a rare occurrence. I also know when it comes to salmon fishing in the rivers the fish are either there or they are not, and one day can change *everything*. Needless to say we didn't catch any kings this day, but we were not alone, most of the boats on the water this morning were also unsuccessful in catching kings.

Campground Tips: *The campsites at Burma Landing have to be some of the smallest I have ever seen. They are so small, a Subaru with its mirrors folded in would barely fit in the designated space. Here's some advice, just get 2 sites, especially if you are in a motorhome. If you have slides and plan on using your awning you might even need 3 sites. The sites are cheap, only costing \$10 per night. The campground host is friendly and takes his job very seriously, so you better be within those invisible lines marking the mini campsites.*

(Although the fee for this trip was waived, our opinions are genuine and not for sale.)





INDEPENDENCE DAY FISHING WEEKEND IN SEWARD

In our hometown of Seward, Alaska, Independence Day is a big event. Over 30,000 people come down for the famous Mount Marathon Race and festivities. Usually we try to leave town or hunker down at the house, so we don't have to fight the crowds. This weekend was going to be different. We were going fishing with old friends on Friday the 3rd and new friends were coming into town for the weekend to share the experiences of Seward on Independence Day.

Catching fish with friends is nothing new, but we had a truly great day on the Swelltime. Rebecca and I were fishing with Jim (who owns the Swelltime), his son, and our friend Joanna. We headed out bright and early at 6am to catch silver salmon and halibut. In Seward, the silvers start showing up the first week of July; so we were confident a few could be found on July 3rd.

Our first stop was Cheval Narrows. There were a few fish on the sonar, but none were biting; so we moved over to Pony Cove. Pony Cove and Cheval Narrows are on the outskirts of Resurrection Bay and some of the first stops for silvers as they return from spending a couple of years at sea

One of the last drifts yielded a surprise for Rebecca. She finally caught her first king salmon! Through the years of fishing with me on the rivers, Rebecca has hooked four kings and only landed one. The one that was landed had to be released because it was foul hooked (not hooked in the mouth and illegal to retain in freshwater). Today was her lucky day. She caught a nice little king that was swimming with the silvers.

By the time the tide switched we had caught 11 silvers, so we decide to head out for halibut. Today's halibut spot consisted of Jim and I looking at the chart plotter and picking an area that looked fishy. We didn't feel like driving for hours so our chosen spot was only 15 minutes away. Upon reaching our mark, we motored around while scanning the sonar for the structure and telltale signs of where to find halibut. . Within 10 minutes of fishing, we brought up our first halibut! There were a few really strong hits, but most of the fish were in the "chicken" class of fish. We grade our halibut with names referencing their size; starting out as ping-pong paddles, to chickens, then come the turkeys.

Generally speaking we like to eat halibut under 50 pounds. There are a few reasons: they are

younger fish which tastes better; larger fish have a higher potential for mercury; and almost all halibut above 50 pounds are females, which makes them the breeders. I used to be a charter captain and I completely understand the thrill of bringing in a huge halibut. Nowadays we get a bigger thrill in releasing the big ones, the following weekend Jim fished Montague Island and released a halibut over 200 lbs!



The chicken bite continued nice and steady. We kept some and released some as we approached our limit. We tried holding out for larger fish, but they never showed. With one fish to go, our friend Joanna got a world-class backlash. We tried to pick it out and ended up having to cut it apart. Once it was resolved (30 minutes later), we all had a good laugh.

On our way back to the barn (the nickname for the harbor), we swung by Pony Cove to see if the salmon were hitting better in the afternoon and they were not. There were still the same five boats fishing there and nobody was catching. We returned to the dock with a respectable load of fish. Once all the salmon and halibut were filleted we each walked away with about 16 pounds of meat, not too shabby.



Earlier in the day some new friends came into Seward for the holiday weekend. There were over a dozen full-time RV bloggers in Alaska for the summer, and it's been great getting to meet all of them. The week before, we shared a meal with Spencer and Rachel from "Where in the World RV."

This weekend Jason and Kristin from Snowmads were taking up residence in our driveway while Chris and Cherie of Technomadia (who were traveling nomadically while their bus got a full makeover) were staying in our guest room before catching a cruise ship south to Vancouver.



We saved some freshly caught salmon and halibut for a special dinner. The [Apollo Restaurant](#) in downtown has a "Catch of the Day" special. You supply the fish and they supply the rest. At \$18 per person, this is the best deal in town; especially since a burger and fries will cost your about the same.

They start you off with a salad and bread sticks, then come the panko-crusted, deep-fried salmon and halibut. The main course was grilled salmon and halibut served with a tarragon sauce and pasta or potatoes. I dare you to leave room for dessert after this feast. Another new friend met us for dinner as well. [Chris Travels](#)

is in Seward for the summer working and making YouTube videos.

The following morning as the mountain runners were preparing to race up Mount Marathon, we slept in and had a late breakfast of fresh eggs and caribou sausage. It is great sharing our Alaskan wild game with friends.

After breakfast we headed into town to watch the start of the Men's race. Mount Marathon has an elevation of 3022 feet and the strongest competitors make it to the top and back down in less than 50 minutes. In my opinion, just climbing the mountain is an accomplishment.

The following morning we had one final treat in store for our out-of-town guests, the most amazing crepes this side of the Atlantic!

We were very thankful to share the weekend with our new friends!





TAKING KIDS FISHING IN ALASKA

Alaska is one of the best places in the world to take kids fishing! The beautiful surroundings and increased odds of catching fish leave a lasting impression.

Most anglers will tell you their passion for fishing started at a young age. In our fast paced world, disconnecting from smartphones, tablets, and video game players is important for both children and adults. My earliest fishing memories are in the mountain lakes of San Diego with my Dad and San Diego Bay with my Grandpa. These lasting memories are the reason why it is important to take kids fishing. Whether you live in Alaska or are just visiting, the sooner you can introduce them to fishing the better.

WHY IS ALASKA ONE OF THE BEST PLACES TO TAKE KIDS FISHING?

Kids need to catch fish! Alaska has some of the best fishing in the world and the odds of reeling in a fish are very high. Some kids don't have the patience to sit for hours waiting for a bite, so make sure you take them to a highly productive fishery.

Our good friends, Russ and Kristine came up for a visit this summer and they brought their kids Nicole and Wyatt. They are a very active outdoors family and go camping and fishing on a regular basis. The "[Force Is Strong](#)" with these kids, Wyatt has already had his picture in a fishing newspaper.

This was their second trip to Alaska and it was hard to tell if the adults or kids were more excited to get out fishing! We decided to go camping at the [South Rolly Campground in the Nancy Lake State Recreation Area](#). This peaceful little place is about 30 minutes north of Wasilla and one of our favorites. There are no ATV's or gas motorboats allowed so things stay nice and quiet. If you are coming on a weekend it might be tough to get one of the few waterfront campsites though. Waterfront or not, it is still a great place to camp.

SCOUTING TRIPS

Unless you are taking a fishing charter, the kids are depending on your skills. If you are not an experienced angler or are visiting unfamiliar waters, I'm giving you permission to go fishing without the kids. This little bit of time to sharpen your skills will make their experience all the better.



The first night (after bedtime for the kids) Russ and I took [the kayaks](#) out fishing. After a long day of flying from California, renting an RV in Anchorage, and driving a couple hours to the campground Russ finally felt like he was on vacation! In the land of the midnight sun we started fishing around 10pm and stayed out past midnight.

This could have been called a “guys fishing trip”, but for the record we were scouting the waters to increase the odds of the kids catching fish. The trip went great, we both caught northern pike and found some elusive trout. The trout were jumping everywhere except on our hooks. Actually they would hit the line as it laid in the water, not our lures.

We threw almost every kind of hardware we had at them; [Kastmasters](#), [SuperDuper Spoons](#), [Panther Martin Spinners](#), [small Rapalas](#). These trout wanted nothing to do with our lures, they were feeding on flies and we didn't have flies or fly rods. We needed to change our technique, starting with buying some flies tomorrow.

A RAINY DAY WE WILL NEVER FORGET!

The next morning it was raining and less than favorable conditions to take the kids fishing. We decided it was a good day to take a drive to [Talkeetna](#). What should have been an uneventful one hour drive turned out to be a terrifying experience. While driving down the Talkeetna Spur Road, we witnessed a moose run into the road and get T-boned by a motorcyclist. Fortunately, the rider was expected to recover from the injuries and the moose ran into the woods. The scene was very intense.

Still shaken from the prior events, we spent some time walking around Talkeetna and visiting the local shops. Lunch was calling and the [Seward's Folly at the West Rib Pub](#) was the answer. Seward's Folly is a massive burger and with a pound of fries, if eaten by one person in less than an hour you earn a T-Shirt. We tackled the burger as a team of four adults and two kids, everyone was stuffed.

By the time we made it back to camp and ate dinner the kids were tired from a long day and it was too late to take them fishing. While we were out Russ and I had picked up a couple [flies](#) and [water bobbers](#) to try and lure those trout in. Needless to say they didn't work as well as we had anticipated.

The trout were regularly hitting our lines and water bobbers, but not the flies. Around midnight, Russ finally tricked a trout into hitting the fly. If we were going to take the kids fishing tomorrow we still needed to figure out a better way of catching these trout.

TIME TO TAKE THE KIDS FISHING!

When we woke up to sunlight creeping through the curtains, I knew it would be a great day to take the kids fishing. Plus, the first words out of their mouths were, “Are we going fishing?” Today was the day, the sun was shining, the birds were chirping, and those darn trout were still jumping.

If the trout didn't like lures or flies, the next step was trying bait. I haven't used bait to catch trout in lakes since I lived in California. Trout being this picky in a small lake is extremely unusual in Alaska, 90% of the time using [4 lbs. test line](#) and little spinners is all I've needed. We rigged one rod with [PowerBait](#) and the other with [Pautzke Balls O'Fire Salmon Eggs](#).

PowerBait did the trick, Wyatt reeled in a trout within minutes of putting a line in the water! Once we figured out what was working we were catching a fish every few minutes. We decided to switch from treble hooks to barbless single hooks, this makes it easier to release the fish. The catching was so good that we had to release fish or the kids would be limited out in 30 minutes and all the fun would be over.

Everyone had a great time fishing off the dock. We only kept a few fish, just enough to wrap in foil and cook over an open fire. It was time to start working our way back to Seward. These kids were excited to catch some big fish in the ocean!

FISHING FOR HALIBUT AND SALMON!

Like I said before, these kids love fishing! After their first experience fishing with us two years ago, they were chomping at the bit to get back on the water. The plan was to fish on a Thursday, but Mother Nature changed that plan. The forecast for Thursday was 30 knot winds and 12' seas. I don't care if you are a kid or adult, that is not fishing weather. Fortunately Wednesday's forecast was beautiful, variable 10 knots and 4' seas, in Seward it doesn't get much better than that!





The week before we'd had a [great fishing trip with our friend Jim](#) who owns the Swelltime, so the plan was to duplicate that day. The first stops were for silver salmon in the Cheval Narrows and Pony Cove. The kids did great! They had so much fun reeling in the spunky silver salmon. Once everyone was happy with their silver salmon catch, we headed out for halibut.

We had already driven an hour to Pony Cove and we didn't want to go much further for halibut fishing. We also wanted to go to a highly productive fishing hole, hunting for big fish takes a while and tests everyone's patience. Last weeks halibut spot would be perfect, after a 15 minute boat ride and 10 minutes to change the gear over to halibut rigs we had lines in the water.

Like the week before, this halibut spot produced as expected. Within minutes of setting a bait on the bottom there was a halibut hitting. These were not big fish, but they were the perfect size for the kids to reel up. The catching stayed steady and we had caught our limit in a little over an hour.

BONKING FISH!

When you catch a salmon or halibut you need to give it a bonk on the head with a small bat to calm it down. This makes it easier to remove the hook and bleed it out. Kids love bonking fish! To some this may seem unethical, but in reality we are humanely dispatching the fish and preserving the quality of the meat for our future consumption. I highly recommend checking out our [video from the trip](#), we got some great footage of the kids!

TIPS FOR OCEAN FISHING WITH KIDS

(Many of these will apply to any fishing trip where you include the kids.)

- 1. Life Vests:** Kids don't float and it is the law! If your child doesn't know how to swim they should wear one anytime they are near the water. Even if they do know how to swim they should wear one whenever they are near a river.
- 2. Seasickness:** This will ruin everyone's day. If your child gets seasick or if you do not know if they do it is best to take a preventative medicine. Look for a non-drowsy

brand because some will knock you out. Even though these are over the counter, I need to cover my ass and tell you to consult a doctor before using any type of medicine.

3. **Keep Them Warm:** Kids are especially vulnerable to the weather conditions. This is why you need to make sure they stay warm, dry, and comfortable. Dress them in layers with a waterproof outer shell and boots.
4. **Going to Bed Early:** For many adults getting up at 5 am is tough and it's the same for children. Make sure you get the kids to bed early the night before so they are well rested for the big day. If they want to take a nap on the boat ride out, let them sleep.
5. **Easy Snacks:** Aside from a healthy lunch bring some easy to eat snacks. It's also nice to bring some saltine crackers and Gatorade in case someone gets seasick.
6. **Entertainment:** If you need to keep the kids occupied or hit their reset button compact toys such as coloring books, games, or video players will come in handy.
7. **Choose the Right Type of Fishing:** Kids like to catch fish, choose a highly productive type of fishing to hold their attention.
8. **Know What You're Doing:** Do your homework and scout a fishery before you take the kids out, this greatly increases your odds of catching fish. You could also go on a fishing charter, these greatly increase your odds of success and give you access to the ocean if you don't have a boat. Charters like [Saltwater Safari](#) in Seward are great for taking families out fishing. They have large stable boats, excellent captains, and two deckhands to help everyone out.
9. **Keep it Engaging:** Keep the kids engaged by having them help with various tasks on the boat; baiting the hooks, bonking fish, and washing down the deck.
10. **Have Fun:** Finally, enjoy your time out on the water knowing you are making lasting memories for you and the kids.



ALASKA FISHING CHARTERS Q&A

WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF FISHING CHARTERS?

- **Boat access:** Unless you have a friend with a boat, you need to take a charter to go out on the ocean. There is also better and more peaceful river fishing away from the walk-in crowds (aka Combat Fishing).
- **Increased odds of success:** A good fishing guide has years or even decades of experience fishing their waters. They know when and where to find the fish, and the techniques needed to catch them.
- **You can focus on fishing and having a good time:** On a fishing charter, the guide does all the work; they drive the boat, prep the bait, supply the gear and tackle, land the fish, clean the fish, etc.

WHAT ARE DISADVANTAGES OF FISHING CHARTERS?

- **Costs:** Taking a fishing charter is costly but when considering the increased odds of success, I feel it's money well spent.
- **Specific regulations:** There are size and limit restrictions for clients of halibut fishing charters. For example, in south-central Alaska, charter halibut fishing is closed on Thursdays and, on the remaining days, one of your two fish limit must be under 29 inches.

WHERE DO YOU PLAN ON FISHING AND STAYING IN ALASKA?

Think about this. It's a huge state and you don't want to book a charter hours away from your campsite or hotel. A long drive is the last thing you want with early morning departures and being exhausted after a day of fishing.

WHAT TIME OF THE YEAR SHOULD YOU COME UP TO ALASKA?

Timing of salmon runs varies from river to river and in the saltwater certain species of fish may be closed or not present at that time. You will need to be very specific in your research on locations.

WHAT DO YOU PLAN ON DOING WITH THE MEAT FROM YOUR FISHING TRIP?

Upon returning from a successful fishing trip you could easily have 20 to 40 pounds of fillets (*per person*) that need to be addressed. Are you prepared to handle this much meat? I take this very seriously because a fish has given its life and you need to make sure it does not go to waste.

- **Fish processing:** Fish processors are found at all major ports and rivers where there are loads of fish to be caught. Some people INSIST on processing their own fish, but we firmly believe that professional processing is the best value. [Quality fish processors](#) use high grade vacuum bags that protect your catch and keep it in prime condition for 1-2 years. What is your time worth? If you have 50 pounds of meat it takes a home-use vacuum packer all night to process that much meat. Then you must freeze the meat which can take days if you have a chest freezer and need to shuffle the meat around to get it to freeze. Expect to pay around \$1.20 per pound to have meat vacuum packed and frozen.

- **Getting the fish home:** If you have a chest freezer in your RV, you are lucky because the problem is solved. For everyone else they need other options. Processors can FedEx your catch to your front door overnight, they can also wait to ship your catch until you are home to receive it. This is a premium service and costs are weight dependent. If you flew up to Alaska, the processor will package it up in 50-pound insulated boxes and you can check it as luggage. Don't worry, your meat will stay frozen for over 24 hours.

DO YOU GET SEVERELY SEASICK AND IT CAN'T BE OVERCOME WITH MEDICINE?

If so, you might want to stick to the rivers or lakes. Unless you rent the entire boat, the captain will not turn around if you get seasick.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A CAPTAIN AND A GUIDE?

In most cases they are one in the same. A Captain has a United States Coast Guard License to drive a boat with paying passengers. A Guide is someone licensed through the state of Alaska to take clients on fishing trips. In rare cases, you could be driven by a Captain to a location on a river and dropped off with a guide who takes you fishing.

WHAT SIZE OF BOAT DO YOU WANT TO BE ON?

When booking an ocean charter, you could be asked what size of boat you want to fish on? There are larger 10-20 passenger boats or smaller 6 passenger boats. Ultimately, it comes down to your personal preference.

- **6-Pack:** Typically, in the 24 to 32-foot range, they take a maximum of six paying passengers. It's an intimate setting where you get to personally know your captain and fellow anglers because you are in tight quarters with them. They all have some sort of a head (toilet) but it might be a pump toilet in the V-Berth with only a curtain for privacy. If a private place to do your business is important, make sure to research the boat you are going out on.
- **10+ passenger boats:** These are larger boats usually in the 38 to 60-foot range and can take anywhere from 7 to 30 clients fishing. These boats are more comfortable if the seas are rough and are also equipped with a crew of deck hands to help all the clients. Almost all of them have private and enclosed heads.

WHAT IS A HALF DAY FISHING CHARTER?

A half day charter means there are two trips per day, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. On the rivers, half day fishing charters are very common due to the short distance traveled. You can also find half day ocean charters in towns like Seward during the silver salmon season.

- **What are the advantages?** Pricing for half day charters is roughly 2/3 to 3/4 the price of a full day charter. Timing, you are not on the water all day and still have time to do another activity. When the fishing is HOT, sometimes all you need is half a day.
- **What are the disadvantages?** Considering the prices of a half day, you can take a full day charter for a little more money. You are not on the water all day, if the fishing is slow you have less time to catch your limit.

ARE MORNINGS OR AFTERNOONS BETTER?

You won't get much of an argument over this one, fishing for salmon is almost always better in the mornings. The exception is when the fishing is HOT it doesn't matter what time of day it is.

Afternoon fishing is for people who want to sleep in or have no other options in their schedule.

HOW MUCH DO CHARTERS COST?

Traditionally, river charters are cheaper than ocean charters due to the costs of the boats and distance traveled (fuel burned) to the fishing grounds. Half day charters are also going to be cheaper than full day charters. Salmon ocean charters are also cheaper than halibut charters.

- **Freshwater:** Half day \$130 - \$180, Full day \$180 - \$250.
- **Ocean:** Half day \$160 - \$200, Full day \$230 - \$350.

ARE THERE CHARTERS ON LAKES?

Yes, the larger lakes such as Lake Louise in the interior of the state have charters for lake trout.

HOW CAN I LEARN ABOUT THE FISHING REGULATIONS?

Fishing regulations can be accessed online from [ADF&G](#) or regulation summary books are available at the vendors who sell fishing licenses.

WHERE DO I GET A FISHING LICENSE?

Licenses can be purchased in advance [online](#) from Alaska Department of Fish and Game or from about 1000 vendors across the state.

WHAT ARE EMERGENCY ORDERS?

Fish and game are carefully managed in Alaska. Biologists [monitor the fish](#) entering the rivers and escapement. If a river has not reached its predetermined levels, they will restrict or close the river to fishing. Guides are responsible for knowing regulations and EO's, you will also find them posted at the trail heads to popular fisheries.





CONCLUSION

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