

Fishing In Portugal

By Steve Robinson

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Portugal has an incredibly diverse range of fishing opportunities but as with many things here it's not easy to find out much about what, where, when & how etc so lets take a quick look at just a few.

Sea fishing

Portugal's location on the continental shelf means it has an extremely wide range of sea fish from the humble sardine & mackerel to shark, tuna & swordfish & many/most coastal towns will have some kind of daily or longer charter boats available & the Islands (especially) have good big game sport fishing opportunities but don't expect these to be cheap as it's an obscenely expensive operation to run & a good website to start your research is www.tightlinesportugal.com which is owned by the mega knowledgeable John Bate.

Beach & rock fishing is also available in many areas should you prefer not to set foot on anything that floats or if you just want a less expensive fishing experience.

Coarse freshwater fishing

Again, diversity is the keyword with coarse freshwater fishing & it has everything from both small & immense rivers as most countries do but there are some larger rivers (especially) that have pollution issues, however plenty of waters here that hold reasonably good fish populations & as with all fishing anywhere in the world, local knowledge is vitally important.

It should be noted that some rivers here also hold sturgeon & if you want to fish the south of the country then www.algarvefishingadventures.com is a good place to start your research.

Moving inland, Portugal has several immense dammed rivers which are used both for water storage & hydro-electric generation & these have created vast 'lakes' such as Castelo Do Bode & Lake Cabril in the central zone & despite legal netting by those that qualify & a massive cormorant overpopulation, it does hold good fish populations & I've seen a number of photos of carp in excess of 25 kg that were taken from these waters. These 'lakes' also hold good populations of black bass & many other species & Lake Cabril hosts the annual Bass Masters fishing competition.

However, it should be noted that these big lakes are incredibly difficult to fish (partly) due to the vastness of the waters & also partly due to access difficulties if you don't have a boat & also partly due to the habit of many of the (mostly) older (local) generation of taking every fish they catch for the table.

If netting & cormorant populations were reduced & if the habit of taking table fish were (at least) reduced, I believe these 'lakes' could offer sport fishing that would be comparable to pretty much anywhere on the planet perhaps with the exception of New Zealand.

Trout & salmon fishing

Some rivers enjoy salmon runs but not in my area (that I know of) so I can't tell you much about that but www.tightlinesportugal.com will have the best information for you on that & Portugal, especially the central & northern zones hold endless tiny bubbling trout streams. In my part of the central zone (Pedrogao Grande) you're never more than a 15 or 20 minute drive from one of them but be warned that they're absolute buggers to even get close to, let alone to fish and when you can get to them then a short rod & light line combined with very short casts will be the order of the day & my own rod of choice is a 6 foot #4 fly rod with a #5 line and that line upgrade helps get the fly where I want it. Most of the smaller trout waters hold predominantly brown trout only. - Or more accurately, I've never caught a rainbow in any of them.

You may well look at many of these trout streams & think they're too small to hold fish but they do indeed hold them albeit most are very small but bear in mind that if small fish are there, then the big ones must have been there to spawn & in my area, pretty much all of these streams eventually run into either Castelo do Bode or Lake Cabril & although I've yet to hook into one, I've seen trout in there that must be at least 3lb+ & I'd suspect much bigger are probably in there as well.

Another trouty surprise you wouldn't expect is that some of the Camaras allow fishing in the river beach areas outside of the tourist season & some even stock those areas from time to time & the video immediately below was filmed in the biggest & most commercial river beach in my entire area which in the summer season even has wave machines & zip wires etc.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qUas7CKD-nM&fbclid=IwAR3V0i3C77ePLXU7KgtsihZVzFDmtVdXPdvmWqTpqrqhXJw-N37qSsdUJKQ>

Another trout (and other fish) hotspot is the River Ceira that flows through the town of Gois and is stocked sporadically & it's sometimes possible to sit by the river in the centre of town & watch trout jumping up the ladders in fairly good numbers.

There are very few still water put & take trout lakes in Portugal that I'm aware of but have heard of one near Minho in the north of Portugal & there might be a few in the Algarve & probably the best site to discover more on that is www.tightlinesportugal.com & although not easy to get hold of the small book 'Pesca a Cana' by Phil Pembroke is a very useful little guide.

Note:

Many trout & salmon waters work on some kind of a day ticket system where tickets are obtained either from the relevant Camara building or fishing shops etc & the only way to find out is usually to ask a local and/or in said Camara or fishing shop & also be sure to check rules on things such as barbed/barbless hooks & bag limits etc.

Fishing licences

There are several ways to buy fishing licences but the easiest by a country mile is to do it on any Multibanco aka ATM machine & the way to do it is:

After introducing your Portuguese Multibanco card and entering your PIN you then have to follow the options presented in the form of:

'Pagamento de Serviços' and then:

'Pagamento ao Estado' Then select the option:

'Licença de Pesca Lúdica'

Then select the type of licence you require & the most popular options are:

Freshwater: 'Pesca Aguas Doces'

Sea/marsh: 'Pesca Aguas Maritimas e Salobras'

NOTE: There are also several sea fishing licence options including big game fish which are very expensive so choose VERY carefully!

National: 'Nacional'

North (in and north of the Douro river): 'Norte'

Centre (in and between the Douro and Tejo rivers): 'Centro'

South (in and south of the Tejo river): 'Sul'

Then enter your ID card number & if you don't have an ID card number enter your NIF number & if a non resident without a NIF number enter your passport number.

Seasons

Generally the freshwater fishing season runs between April and November but confusingly, fishing licences run from January to January.

Fishing is not usually allowed between sunset and sunrise.

Trout 1 March to 31 July

Alge River in the north, sandy streams in the north, Minho and Lima River.
Lakes and streams in Serra da Estrella mountains such as Lagoa Comprida
Largemouth Bass 1 July to 14 March

Barbel 1 July to 14 March

All rivers and streams

Carp 1 July to 14 March
Rivers and streams in the central and south

Shad 1 February to 14 July
Rivers in Portugal during the spring. At other times for year only at sea
Salmon 1 March to 31 July

In the Lima and Minho rivers
Remember in places where salmon breed no fishing of any kind is allowed
except during the salmon season.

Sturgeon 16 January to 14 July

All rivers

Langoustine/crayfish are divided into the indigenous white footed crayfish &
the invasive vermelhoda-Louisiana, American (Red) crayfish.

The former are listed as a minimum size of 8 cm & they cannot be sold outside
of the county they're caught in. However, the white footed crayfish is
extremely rare in most waters here & I've never even seen one. Trap fishing
allowed from 1 June to 31 August only.

The invasive vermelhoda-Louisiana, American (Red) crayfish can be taken all
year round by any method & traps are specifically mentioned as legal & (I'm
told) no limit to number of traps, no minimum size limit & no limit on numbers
you may take.

Tight lines!