

A GUIDE TO FISHING IN THE WESSEX REGION

BOAT FISHING

The Wessex region hosts some of the best all year round fishing in the Country with many British records being accounted for from the waters off Weymouth and the Isle of Wight.

TO THE EAST

If you trail your own boat, launching sites can be found at Hayling Island, Eastney, Old Portsmouth, Gosport, Stokes Bay and Lee-on-Solent.

Langstone and Portsmouth Harbours are good areas to fish throughout the year from boats. In winter months, October through to February, large bags of Flounders can be taken. A lot of different species frequent the harbours such as Pollack, Plaice, Bream and Sliver Eels, but these are mostly summer species. Pout available throughout the year.

Boats fishing from Langstone and Portsmouth Harbours tend to fish marks to the east of the Isle of Wight and Nab Tower for a huge variety of species, and fishing offshore requires 30lb class tackle and leads of well over 1 lb in the stronger tides.

Summer inshore provides Plaice, Bream, Bass, Gurnard, Wrasse, Pollack, Smoothhound, Mackerel and Dogfish.

Winter inshore provides Dogfish, Whiting and occasional Codling. Boats are looking to go offshore at this time of year for the large Cod and Whiting that arrive around October and through to January.

Summer offshore provides Rays, Conger, Tope, Smoothhound, Bream, Bass, Pollack, Huss, Mackerel, and Dogfish.

Winter offshore provides mainly large Cod, Whiting, Rays, Congers, and Dogfish.

CENTRAL

Fishing from small boats, the float and spoon method is widely used and very successful, particularly in dull and choppy conditions. Sink and draw method can also be rewarding.

Boats may be launched at any state of the tide, at Crosshouse Hard, situated just above the Itchen Bridge, on the Southampton side of the River Itchen. There is also a slipway on the east side of the River Itchen just below the Itchen Bridge, and can be accessed from Portsmouth Road, Woolston. There is also a slipway on Weston Shore, but launching at this site is only possible two hours either side of high water. Launching at the public slipways at Warsash, Hamble and Hythe Marina is possible at all states of the tides. Calshot has the same conditions as at Weston Shore.

The "Run Up" and the first hour of the ebb are good off Weston Shore and Netley shores, fishing in 6-12 feet of water. On the other side of Southampton Water, fishing is particularly good above Hythe Pier during the two hours stand of high water, when there is a nice tidal movement.

The best fishing for small boats are from the month of May to January.

Small boats may also be launched in the Lymington River, Keyhaven and at Milford. Only well equipped boats should venture out to the Needles and beyond.

Deep Sea Boats fishing from Hamble and Southampton tend to go east and fish the same areas as the boats from Portsmouth.

Boats fishing from Lymington and Keyhaven tend to venture more to the west of the Isle of Wight to fish areas past the Needles lighthouse, such as Freshwater Reef and the Fairway (approx 3 miles offshore).

Summer inshore If the weather is not so good the more sheltered waters in the Solent and off Milford Shingle Bank can provide some excellent action with Bass, Rays, Smoothhound, Bream, Wrasse, Pollack and Dogfish available in good numbers at various times during the summer months.

Winter inshore provides Whiting, Dogfish, Codling, and Bass. Here again, boats are looking to go offshore to find large Cod and Whiting that are around from October to January.

Dinghy anglers can fish the lee of Hengistbury Head for Plaice, Pollack, Mackerel, Wrasse and Conger, during the summer months, while large Cod are boated in winter.

The countless channels within Poole Harbour offer excellent fishing for the dinghy angler. Flounders are the main stay winter fish with fish over 4lbs being caught. Plaice show from May, together with Eels and Mullet. In the deeper waters, Pouting and Whiting can be caught.

For the more adventurous dinghy angler, Christchurch Ledge and Poole Bay attracts Bream, Plaice, Rays, Pollack, Conger, Wrasse and Dogfish during the summer months, while there's hefty Cod and Whiting in the winter.

There are several slipways around the harbour of Poole, with Baiter Point probably the best for launching and parking. Launching from Christchurch Harbour is available, although the area is very busy during the summer months. Launching facilities for small craft are available at Swanage, but parking is a problem during the summer.

Deep Sea Boats fishing from Poole and Swanage tend to fish the waters off Bournemouth and Swanage Bay. The Bournemouth Bay area provides good summer fishing for Plaice, Dabs, Bream and Gurnards, with Rays a little further off. At this time of the year the fishing off Old Harry Rocks and Swanage Bay provides excellent fishing for Black Bream, Bass, Rays, Pollack, Smoothhound, Dogfish, Mackerel and Tope. Move further offshore and Conger, Tope and Rays come more into the equation. For more sheltered fishing, Poole Harbour offers a chance of Bass, Flounders, Plaice, Pollack, and Wrasse plus even a Herring or two in the winter.

Summer offshore provides Rays, Tope, Congers, Smoothhound, Huss, Dogfish, and Mackerel.

Winter offshore provides mainly large Cod, Whiting, Congers, Ray, and Dogfish.

TO THE WEST

Portland Harbour offers a safe haven for Dinghy anglers and is good for Plaice, Wrasse, Pollack, Flounders, Dabs, and Pouting, during the summer, with Whiting and the odd Codling in winter. Certain areas of the harbour are restrictive anchoring. The wreck of HMS Hood at the southern entrance to the harbour offers excellent Pollack fishing between April and May.

Weymouth offers excellent launching facilities, but beware, strong south easterly winds can be difficult to negotiate.

Weymouth currently hosts the largest fleet of charter boats along the south coast which all have access to arguably the widest variety of fishing in our area during the course of the year. This is due to Weymouth's access to a wide variety of differing sea bed conditions within a relatively small sea area.

Summer inshore provides Plaice, Turbot, Brill, Bass, Rays, Pollack, Wrasse, Conger, Huss, Dogfish, Bream and Mackerel.

Winter inshore will produce Codling, Whiting, Wrasse, Congers and Rays.

Summer offshore produces Turbot, Plaice, Brill, Bass, Pollack, Ling, Conger, Huss, Dogfish, Mackerel, Bream and Wrasse. As with the East of the region, 30lb class tackle is recommended plus 1 lb + leads to cope with the strong tidal conditions offshore.

Winter offshore produces Cod, Whiting, Conger, Rays, Pollack, Huss, Dogfish, and Wrasse.

BAIT - (for all areas) - Mackerel, Squid, and ragworm.

MAIN CHARTER PORTS - East – Langstone, Portsmouth, Gosport, (Southampton); **Central** - Lymington, Poole (Keyhaven, Christchurch, Swanage); **West** - Weymouth (Portland)

All of the major Charter Ports offer boats that cater for deep sea wreck fishing and 3 - 5 day Channel Island fishing trips. Contact local tackle shops as advertised in this handbook for further details of available Boats and an update of the fishing in the area.

SHORE FISHING

The area has some great shore fishing for the majority of the year and offers something for everyone in the shape of sandy shallow beaches, steep shingle beaches, excellent rock marks, pier fishing and sheltered harbours.

TO THE EAST – From Portsmouth through to the Solent, beaches are mainly shallow surf beaches with a mixture of sand and shingle.

Hayling Island – excellent summer fishing is available on Hayling from the seafront and in the entrances to the harbours, with ample car parking on the front. Bass, Smoothhound, Plaice and Mackerel are the mainstays of the summer with excellent Cod, Whiting, Flounders and Dabs through the winter months. The Plaice fishing can be good in the period March to early May. Pouting are available all year round.

Langstone Harbour – Flounders can be caught mainly along the Eastern Road side of the harbour, with Eels putting in an appearance during the summer months.

Eastney Beach – March-April brings the Plaice from their winter spawning grounds along the Eastney Beach. Plenty of Flounders and Pouting can be caught throughout the year and some decent Smoothhound. Bass can be caught in the mouth of Langstone Harbour, together with Black Bream during the summer months.

South Parade Pier – Fishing is available by payment of a Day Ticket. Most summer fish can be caught from this venue with Pout, Whiting and Cod being the mainstay winter fish. Excellent Plaice are caught during the spring.

Clarence Beach – a variety of fish available from this beach, including Bass Eels and Soles.

Portsmouth Harbour – Flounders can be caught all year round with Bass and Eels showing during the summer. Fishing is available from a number of places including Fareham Creek, Portchester Foreshore and Tipner Ranges.

Gosport – Haslar Wall provides good catches of Cod in the winter, and Plaice, Sole, Bass, Eels and Mackerel in the summer months.

Stokes Bay (including Gilkicker) – is well known for sea angling and the night tides are the best for Plaice, Sole, Bass and Silver Eels, and some very good Smoothhound, well into double figures, expect Codling, Pouting and Whiting in the winter.

Lee-on-Solent – the deeper water at night can produce Pouting, Whiting, Codling and Dogfish during the winter, with Smoothhound and Sole showing in the summer. The shallower water on the Western end will often produce Plaice, Bass, Flounder, Sole and Eels.

Hillhead and Meon Shore – Flat beaches with good angling at the top of the tide after dark produce Plaice, Flounder, Sole, Eels and Bass, and the occasional Sting Ray, all can be taken at various times along these beaches. During recent years, Smoothhound up to 20lbs have been taken during June and July.

CENTRAL

Southampton Water has for centuries been the home of the Flounder and today this is still the most common fish to be caught, during the summer, Smoothhound up to 8lbs can also be expected from Hamble and Westfield Common section.

Except when there are strong NW or SE Winds, the estuary is very sheltered and small boat and shore fishing can be very rewarding.

Shore fishing is possible in practical all weather conditions in Southampton Water, and is profitable along the whole of the North East shore line. Weston Shore is probably the favourite spot. Catches are mainly Flounders with occasional good Silver Eels, Plaice, Bass and Mullet. Fishing three hours either side of High Water using light ledger or paternoster tackle.

The best months are October until January for Flounders, and April to September for the summer species.

Warsash, Hamble River Mouth – Good angling can be had with Bass, Flounder, Plaice, Mullet and Eels being the main quarry. Both day and night tides are productive.

Hamble, Westfield Common and Netley – Day fishing mainly for Flounder, Plaice and Eels, with the occasional Bass and Mullet. Night fishing produces Pout and Sole. Smoothhound show during the evening tides in June and July.

Weston Shore – This beach produces many fish with the Flounder being the main species for the angler, along with Bass, Silver Eels and the occasional good Plaice. This venue is an ideal shore venue for Juniors, as casting long distances is not required.

Itchen River – There are many suitable sites for shore angling, with flounders again being the main species.

Marchwood (Magazine Lane) – Winter fishing for Pout, Whiting, Bass, Codling and Flounder, with Sole, Eels, Mullet and Dogfish showing during the summer months.

Hythe Marina – Excellent fishing for Flounder during the autumn and winter. Most summer species for this area caught within this vicinity.

Calshot – As this is private property, general fishing is not allowed along Calshot Spit or around the centre. Club membership is available for those who wish to fish this venue. Apply to the activities centre for details.

Flounder, Bass and Pouting are the commonest fish caught at this venue. Calshot beach fishes best at night for Flounder, Pout, Bass and Sole. Good Plaice fishing during the day. Beware of sailboarders, especially during the summer months.

The Solent offers a wide variety of species from the shore.

Lepe beach - is good for Smoothhound, Bass, Sole and Flounders, and at Sowley you might even find the odd Stingray takes your ragworm. Do not go on the sedge area on high tides as this becomes covered.

Lymington and Pennington Banks – This is a sea defence wall which stretches from Lymington to Keyhaven. Flounders are in prime condition from October to January. Bass can be caught from April to June. During the summer months, Mullet are available from around the Yacht Marina. Fishing in mid summer, float tackle recommended because of the numerous shore crabs that inhabit the area. Smoothhound can also be caught during the summer evenings from the Pennington Wall, especially on crab.

Hurst Shingle Bank - This is a huge bank of shingle that stretches out to the nearest point of the Isle of Wight. On its west facing bank it provides a steep shingle beach that can offer both inshore and many offshore species. Bass, Bream, Flounders, Rays, Gurnards, Sole, Tope, Smoothhound and even Congers can be caught on certain marks along the shingle bank. In the winter some good Cod and Whiting can be caught. Check local tidal conditions as this can influence your lead choice in the strong tidal movement at certain times. On the east and Solent facing side of the bank is the entrance to Keyhaven harbour where more sheltered waters offer Bass, Flounders and Sole.

Hurst Castle – To fish this venue, either walk the shingle bank – approximately 1½ miles, or during the summer catch the ferry from Keyhaven. Fishing the bay facing the Solent can produce Flounder, Sole Bass, Eels and Plaice. The water is deeper near the point facing the fort on the Isle of Wight. This deep mark known as “Hurst Hole”, and Rays, Dogfish, Conger, Pouting, Bass and Smoothhound can be caught from this mark. Garfish and Mackerel can be had by float fishing in the summer. Winter produces Cod and Whiting.

Milford Beach, Hordle Cliff and Taddiford – Evening fishing best during the summer as these beaches are used for bathing. Shore fishing can produce Rays, Plaice, Sole, Flounder, Bass and Pouting.

The beaches of Barton, Highcliffe, Mudeford, Southbourne and Bournemouth all offer shallow sloping sandy sea beds, which produce Sole, Plaice, Dabs, Bass and Flounders, plus at certain times of the year, Rays move inshore along with Smoothhound (Barton and Southbourne). Occasional cod and Whiting move in from October onwards.

Barton-on-Sea – Species here include Bass, Sole, Plaice, Flounder, Rays and Pouting. There are patches of clay on the sea bed where your weight may be difficult to retrieve.

Highcliffe – The castle area is a popular venue for Bass, Thornback Ray, Sole and Plaice and some quality Smoothhound. This is a bathing beach, so evening fishing is recommended during the summer months. Winter fishing produces Pouting and Whiting.

Friars Cliff and Avon Beach – These are useful beaches which are sheltered when the wind is gale force from the west to south-west. Species here include Bass, Plaice, Pouting, Eels and Smoothhound in the summer, with Flounder caught during the autumn and winter months. A very popular match venue during December, January and February for Pouting, Rockling and Flounders.

Mudeford Spit – Excellent fishing during the summer months for Bass, especially at the harbour entrance. Hefty Cod are the target species during winter. Flounders are available both at night and during the day. Plaice also show in the summer and Pouting around autumn.

Hengistbury Head – Variety of fish available during the year, with the groyne fishing the best during the summer. Light tackle can produce Mackerel, Garfish, Pollack, Wrasse and some good size Bass. The odd Conger turns up off the end of the groyne.

Double Dykes – Popular haunt from June to December. Small Turbot, Plaice, Flounders, Bass and Sole caught in the summer, with Cod and Whiting available in autumn and winter. Night tides best for Sole and Cod.

Southbourne Beach – A sandy beach which offers plenty of variety during the autumn. Sole, Bass, Plaice, Flounders, Cod, Pouting and Whiting fish best on night tides. Good sized Small-Eyed Ray also available.

Boscombe Pier – Dabs, Flounders, Plaice and Pouting caught from this location with Whiting the dominant species. At present angling is very restrictive due to the condition of the pier. **PLEASE NOTE THAT THE PIER HAS NOT BEEN DISMANTLED.**

Bournemouth Beach – Lying between the piers, Flounders are available on night tides between January and March. Dabs, Pouting, Rockling, Whiting and the odd Codling are also on the cards. Fishing during the summer is very restrictive due to bathers, but fishing for Sole and Pouting on night tides is very lucrative.

Bournemouth Pier - This venue is noted as an all year round flat-fish mark. Few big Plaice are also caught. Mackerel and lively Garfish are available from the end of the pier, with sizeable Mullet and Pollack being caught around the piles.

Sand Banks – A busy holiday area during the summer. Sport is restrictive to winter months for Flounders, Pouting, Whiting and Bass being available. Early spring fishing can sometimes produce good sized Plaice.

Poole Harbour – One of the hot spots along the south coast. With many islands and sheltered shores, fishing venues can be found in even the most severe weather conditions. The shallow water of the harbour provides a nursery area for Bass, Mullet, and Flat-fish. Specimen size Flounders can be caught from many of the shallow beaches during the months of September to January. Eels and good size Bass can be caught during the summer months. Fishing during early morning or at night, along the Town Quay, can produce Pouting, Whiting and Pollack, with Mullet showing in the early morning. Be careful on some of the beaches, as these are often frequented by Sailboarders. The harbour entrance can produce figure Bass through the summer and autumn.

Studland Bay – With a flat and sandy beach, Studland Bay is worth fishing for Flounders during the winter months, with good Plaice showing during the summer and Bass, when the surf is good. Last three hours of the flood tide produce the best catches.

TO THE WEST - The rugged cliffs from Swanage through to Weymouth provide a stark contrast to the sandier eastern side to our area. As you approach Weymouth the beaches return to shallow sloping sand and on the entrance to Weymouth Harbour is Stone Pier. Further to the west is Portland which offers a superb rocky peninsular jutting out into the deep waters offshore. The fishing here can be spectacular. Sweeping away from Portland is the infamous Chesil beach, a steep, shingle beach which can produce almost every species found in our waters. Seek local knowledge from a local tackle shop for the up to date news on what's being caught, before you fish. It could save you a long walk.

Swanage Bay – A refuge for anglers during a strong south westerly. The rocks at the eastern end produce Pollack, Wrasse, small Conger and the odd Bass. The centre of the bay will see Flounders, Pouting, Plaice and the occasional Ray, which can be taken at night. The pier fishes well for Mullet, Wrasse, Mackerel and Pouting during the day, with Conger at night.

Peveler Point - A rough ground venue with the summer fishing for small Pollack, Wrasse, Mullet and Bass.

Dancing Ledge - A walk of approximately 1 mile, and a descent down the cliff will bring you to big Wrasse, Pollack and Mullet, during the summer, fished with light tackle. Known as a good Conger mark during the autumn.

Chapman's Pool – Holds Bass, Wrasse, Pollack and Conger, and a few flatfish in summer. Approach for this venue is via Worth Matravers, but beware of the crumbling cliff.

Durlston Bay – A shallow rocky mark which fish well for big Wrasse from September to early October. Mullet appear in numbers when the sea is flat, calm and clear. Durlston Head is famous for its superb Conger fishing. Good sized Pollack and Wrasse, with the occasional double figure Bass are also available during the summer. Be careful and fish this venue only during calm conditions, as during the slightest swell, the sea is pushed over the top of the flat rock shelf.

Kimmeridge Bay – A shallow water mark, noted for its Bass and Mullet, taken on light tackle.

Warbarrow Bay and Tout – A deeply shelving shingle beach which can produce Conger, Dogfish, Wrasse, Rays, Pollack and Flatties. The Tout has a strong tidal race and will fish well for large Conger, Pollack, and even the odd Tope in summer. This venue is only approached, by foot, from the deserted village of Tyneham, which lies in the middle of the Ministry of Defence Firing Range.

Lulworth Cove – Provides a sheltered haven during rough weather. Summer is very busy with small boats anchoring a few yards off the beach. Bass, Conger, Wrasse and Pouting can be taken with ledger gear in the autumn. The rocky platform at the eastern entrance fishes well for small Pollack, Wrasse, Garfish and Mullet, especially on light tackle.

Durdle Door – Popular holiday beach during the summer, but the quiet autumn nights will bring Huss, Conger and Rays to the beach, although the odd specimen Sole, Plaice and Pouting can never be ruled out.

Ringstead Bay – This used to be excellent venue for large Conger and Plaice, but has declined over the years. Conger still taken from rocky areas with the odd Plaice showing. Small Pollack and Wrasse will rattle rod tips.

Redcliffe Beach and Point – Fairly steep shelving shingle beach which will produce specimen size Sole at night, during the summer. Also noted as a Conger mark, along with Pollack, Plaice, Pouting and Dogfish.

Preston Beach – A non starter during the summer months. Night time tides during the winter will produce Flounder, Pouting, Dabs and small Whiting. Odd Bass can be expected during stormy periods.

Weymouth Harbour – Mullet are quite prolific here, together with Flounder, Pollack, Pouting and the Coalfish feeding at night.

Stone Pier – Fishes all year round and is a safe haven for youngsters. Light float tackle brings Pollack, Wrasse, Mackerel, Garfish, Mullet and Whiting, while ledgered baits produce Flounders, Pouting and even the odd Codling in the autumn.

Portland – Wrasse and Conger are the main sport along the coast of Portland, with Church Ope Cove, Cheyne, Pulpit Rock and Ocean Rock being the best vantage points. Pollack can also be taken at most spots.

Chesil Beach – Some very good fish are caught along the 18 miles of shingle beach. Access is extremely limited and often a long hike or a short boat trip across the Fleet is needed to reach the fishing areas. Excellent Cod can be caught in the winter, at a number of points, including Bridging Camp, Moonfleet and Langton Herring. Good Conger and Wrasse can be caught during night tides in the autumn and winter, together with Dabs,

Whiting, Pollack and Pouting. Fishing the Fleet itself can produce Flounders and hefty Bass. Mackerel can be caught in large quantities during the summer.

Abbotsbury – Large shoals of Mackerel patrol close to the shore, which in turns produce a number of predatory species, ranging from double figure Smoothhound,, to 40lb Conger. Whiting, Pouting, Dabs, Plaice and Dogfish are also caught, while Cod can be taken to the eastern end of the beach, during the winter.

West Bexington – Plaice are the main target during the early part of the year, with the first fish appearing around March. Mackerel and Dabs are the dominant species during the summer, with Whiting and Cod turning up in the autumn and winter.

BAIT - Worm baits for flatfish, Gurnards, Wrasse and Pollack; sandeel for Bass and Rays; crab for Smoothhound, Wrasse and Bass, and fish baits for Conger and Rays. Squid for Bream and lug/squid cocktails for the Cod and Whiting.

Consult the local tackle shops for the latest news on what fish are currently feeding and where.