



When to Fish:

Anglers focusing on salmon should concentrate on the month of October for the best fishing. Steelheaders, conversely, should plan on mid October through December, as these fish are the last to enter the system. The month of November is a sure bet on any of these tributaries unless flood or drought years come into play. Spring fishing occurs between March and May.

A word about angler pressure: It is wise to plan your trip during the week. Weekends are by far busier, so be prepared to battle crowds on weekends. However, we can still avoid much of the pressure by simply fishing where most others don't bother to look!

Fall Mornings and Weather:

It can often be cold, and getting out early in the morning is often paramount to fishing success.

Dressing appropriately for the conditions can make the difference between a poor day of fishing and a great day of fishing. Layering does the trick; thin, next-to-skin base layers (like Patagonia Capilene) followed by insulating mid layers of fleece, topped with a waterproof Gore-Tex shell will keep you toasty no matter what is happening outside. Thick, heavy socks and multiple pairs of gloves with a beanie will keep your all important digits warm. Average temperatures hover in the forties midday, but is near freezing or colder in the early morning hours.

To plan the fishing trip of a lifetime
or for more info contact us at:

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Get the Jones!

SIXTEEN YEARS EXPERIENCE

Join the talented, professional guide staff at Steelhead Jones for the best steelhead fishing in the Great Lakes region. Experience the rush of a bolting steelhead caught *on the fly* in the many renowned tributary streams surrounding some of the best forage basins in North America; Lake Erie and Lake Ontario. Once you hook your first steelhead with Steelhead Jones, you'll be *jonesing* for more.

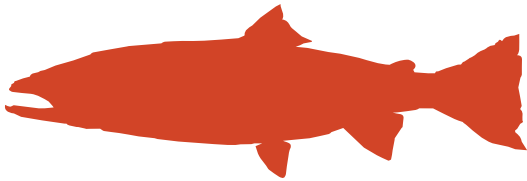
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STEELHEAD
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The best source for steelhead,
lake-run brown trout, and a variety
of salmon species in the renowned
Steelhead Alley

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About Steelhead Alley:

Only in recent times has the steelhead fishing surrounding the Great Lakes evolved into the world class fishery it is now. The introduction of the zebra mussel has transformed both Lake Erie and Ontario with the mussels' associated cleansing and filtering effects.

Steelhead Alley consists of the shorelines of Lake Erie and Lake Ontario between the cities of Cleveland, Ohio and Rochester, New York. Within this area lay hundreds of miles of fishable tributary streams which all receive significant spawning runs of fish. This generally begins in September and peaks around Thanksgiving, depending on rainfall and cooling weather trends.

Stream selection varies, depending upon recent water conditions and the timing of your trip. Bear in mind that these tributary streams are all primarily rain fed. Difficult to predict river conditions can be easily overcome by maintaining contact with Steelhead Jones as your date approaches, and by simply leaving the destination up to your guide.

The Seasons:

Typically, the New York Ontario tributaries will occupy October's fishing, while Pennsylvania's Erie tributaries turn on in November. The autumn months are far and away the most favored choice of most anglers. The weather, scenery, and spectacular fishing are what we look forward to every year.

By January, weather conditions and angler fortitude dictate fishing quality. During mild periods of weather, fishing can often be good as the streams unthaw and our search for ravenous steelhead begins again. Willing anglers can often be rewarded with eager, unpressured fish and solitude on otherwise busy streams.

The fish remain in the system through the winter, and by March, freshly-run fish begin to show up again. In addition, the arrival of the some of the most challenging small fly/big fish nymphing in the world! 5x tippets and flies as small as size 20 are the norm.

April marks some of the best fishing of the year as the larger rivers in Ohio and Michigan begin to turn on. At this time through mid May the largest fish of the year are consistently caught and opportunities abound for drift boat trips.

Unlike other boats, the drift boat is the ideal platform for fly fishing when navigating and fishing larger streams. Float fishing allows you to cover water and catch fish that wading anglers might otherwise not be able to access.



Lodging and Travel:

Lodging and travel plans depend on the date of your trip. Flying into Rochester or Buffalo, New York is best for the Ontario trips, whereas Cleveland, Ohio or Erie, Pennsylvania are best for the Erie trips. Oftentimes, it is cheaper to fly into one or the other. You may always drop us an email or give us a phone call for airport recommendations. If need be, we can happily pick you up at the airport if you don't wish to rent a car.

Once in our hands, you'll be with us until you leave, as we are full service guides who enjoy the company of our clients. Lodging ranges from bed and breakfasts to the inexpensive motel. It should be noted that this is not an expensive part of the world to travel to; meals, lodging, and guide fees are a fraction of the norm of other top fishing destinations, though the quality is on par with anywhere.



Fishing the Great Lakes tributaries centers around three species of salmonids; Steelhead Trout, Brown Trout, and Chinook (King) Salmon



Great Lakes steelhead and the majority of their lives in the lakes themselves until reaching maturity, at which point they run into the many surrounding tributary streams to eventually spawn.

Though steelhead are essentially just large rainbow trout, rainbow trout are a far cry from steelhead. Steelhead trout are not what the typical fly angler is generally used to.

Colors of fish can range from brightly hued, chrome fresh runners to dark colored spawning males with deep red stripes. Rarely is a fish under five pounds

caught, and the average is around ten pounds and approaching thirty inches in length. Fish up to twenty pounds are caught every year! Steelhead are often regarded as the best fighting fish in fresh water. Acrobatics can range from flips and cartwheels to tail-walks, barrel rolls and broken tippets. It is said that *steelheaders* are born during the first run of their first fish, instantly becoming addicts.



Lake run brown trout, quite simply, giant versions of the same brown trout which exist on most trout streams. The only exception being that they can become true giants. Fish up to thirty pounds are caught every year, creating true once-in-a-lifetime fishing opportunities!

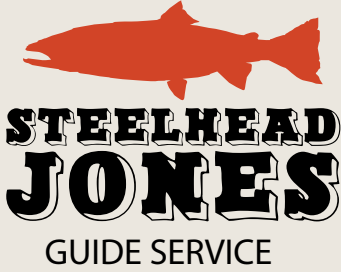
These obese trout range in color from buttery yellows to brilliant oranges and darker reddish tones; all with huge spots. Great Lakes brown trout are generally thought of as being easier to catch and fight than their *steelie* counterparts, which make them a nice break from the hair-raising antics of steelhead fishing. Nowhere else in the country boasts the quality, consistency and size of the Great Lakes brown trout fishery.



The Pennsylvania Rivers: Fishing Pennsylvania’s Erie tributaries centers around the greatest of all run species, the steelhead. These giant descendants of rainbow trout exist in unfathomable numbers thanks to the unparalleled stocking efforts of the Pennsylvania Department of Natural Resources. Elk Creek is the most important river, though a number of smaller tributaries come into play depending on rainfall. November fishing can frequently yield fifty to seventy-five hookups a day, with the average steelhead tipping the scales at around ten pounds.



The New York Rivers: New York’s Lake Ontario tributaries of main importance are: the Oswego River, Oak Orchard Creek, and Sandy Creek. The Oswego represents the largest of the three, at nearly an eighth mile wide. Massive, shallow shale beds and crystal clear water make for fantastic sight fishing similar to saltwater flats fishing. Oak Orchard Creek is far smaller with a gravel bottom and is located in a hardwood forest outside Albion. Sandy Creek, famous for its enormous brown trout, is a narrow and winding creek centered in pasture land also outside of Albion. All of these creeks share diversified runs of salmon, steelhead, lake run brown trout, and even a few bonus species such as *lake trout* and even *atlantic salmon*. Sight fishing is the norm, though stream conditions can always vary depending on recent weather and precipitation. More often than not, several species of salmonids will be in the river at any given time. Besides the well known creeks, larger rivers like the Cattaraugus and the Niagara are superb fisheries. The *Catt* fishes best in December and is known for 45% naturally reproducing fish and excellent swing fishing. The Niagara fishes best from November through January and provides the opportunity to catch steelhead, lakers, browns, kings, cohos, and sturgeon all in the same day!



Chinook, or king salmon, often called the sharks of the Great Lakes. With lengths of over forty inches and weights of fifty pounds or more possible, kings represent the ultimate tug-of-war. Even the stoutest ten weight fly rod will grimace under the strain of hooking one of these locomotives with fins.



Prespawn kings, fresh from the lake and early in their runs up river, have not changed much since they left the lake and are referred to as *fresh runners*. We strictly guide our clients on the fresh runners near the lake, which eliminates the post spawn, dying fish. Freshly run kings are underrated and challenge the conventional ideal of salmon fishing. These fresh runners do in fact “eat”, both to feed and as a result of anger. Unlike Alaska or in the Pacific Northwest, our fish do not make a transition from salt to fresh water. Violent strikes and aerial antics are the norm. Since king salmon are the first to migrate into the rivers, it is important to book October if you would like to concentrate on them.

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