

Hughes River Expeditions
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The Snake River Fishing, Tackle, and License Details

The Snake River in Hells Canyon is a fisherman's delight. Both fly fishing and spin casting techniques work well. Beginners to expert anglers are welcome. Fishermen can arrange fishing trips with two fishermen per boat & guide. Charter fishing trips are available for parties of 8 or more.

Fishing in Hells Canyon is unique. Any cast may bring in a smallmouth bass, rainbow trout, or channel catfish. Remarkably, all these species live in the Snake River along with steelhead (ocean-run rainbow trout), migrating chinook salmon, and huge white sturgeon, which can reach 10 feet or more in length. Hells Canyon is renowned for its excellent smallmouth bass fishery, and for hard fighting rainbow trout.

Smallmouth bass (*Micropterus dolomieu*) and **rainbow trout**

(*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) make up most of the catch. Trout range from 9 to 16 inches, with an occasional fish up to 19 inches. Bass run from one half to two pounds, with average fish around one pound.

Rainbow trout in Hells Canyon are often non-migrating steelhead that become "resident" rainbows. Fly fishing for Snake River **smallmouth bass** with balsa poppers is great fun. Rainbow trout rise to dry flies along cliffs at the river's edge. Wet flies work well for both bass and trout. Spin casting is usually the most successful technique for both species. Spin cast fishermen use spinners, crank baits, and grub worms.

Channel catfish (*Ictalurus punctatus*) weigh up to 5-6 pounds. We catch catfish occasionally during the day, but the best time to fish for Mr. Whiskers is during the night. Channel catfish are one species that has been in decline in Hells Canyon during recent years.

Late September and October trips provide an opportunity to fish for **steelhead** (ocean-run rainbow trout) (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*). Steelhead return from the Pacific Ocean to complete their life cycles in Snake River tributaries. Snake River steelhead are "A" Run fish, and they are famous for an acrobatic hard fight. Hells Canyon "A" Run steelhead range from 4-10 pounds with average fish around 6-8 pounds. Steelhead fishermen can plan fall trips on the Scenic River from Pittsburg Landing to Heller Bar with McKenzie Drift Boats.

White sturgeon (*Acipenser transmontanus*) are the largest freshwater fish in North America. Ancestors of today's white sturgeon appeared on earth 400 million years ago. Historically, these fish ranged throughout the Columbia, Snake, Salmon, Clearwater, and Kootenai rivers, even venturing into the Pacific Ocean a few times during their long lives. The life cycle for a white sturgeon approximates that of a human. Sturgeon begin to reproduce at about age 18, and can live to be over 80 years of age. The largest recorded sturgeon in Idaho was caught in the Snake River in 1889. It was 20 feet long, weighed 1,500 pounds and was more than 100 years old. Today, Hells Canyon sturgeon are landlocked by the Columbia and Lower Snake River dams. Hells Canyon sturgeon continue to reproduce, and anglers are allowed to fish for white sturgeon on a "catch & release" basis. Some Hells Canyon sturgeon exceed 10 feet in length.

Recommended Tackle: We provide a few rods, reels, tackle on all our summer trips. Serious fishermen usually prefer their own gear. Call to chat about fishing, recommended equipment, tackle. On fishing charters, we provide all required gear, and, of course, you are welcome to bring your own equipment.

Spin Casting. Light weight or ultra light gear and line.

- Spinners: Mepps, daredevil, roostertail, cast master.
- Crank Baits: Killer B's, Rattletrap, Fat Wrap, Crawdad, Perch, etc.
- Leadhead & 5" grubworms. (pearl, motor oil, lime green, purple, white, ...)

Fly Fishing. 5-6 weight rods and lines (double taper floating, weight forward, and sinking tip all work).

- Flies: Elk Hair Caddis, Dave's Hopper, Joe's Hopper, Muddler Minnow, Woolly Bugger (black, olive, brown...), Woolly Worm (black, olive, brown, ...), Clouser Minnow, etc.
- Bass Poppers: black/yellow, yellow/red, chartreuse/olive, mouse, etc.

Sturgeon Gear is provided by Hughes River Expeditions. We use ocean style rods and reels, and 130 pound braided dacron line. Catch & release regulations.

Steelhead. Medium weight spin casting gear (12-14 lb. Line), and 7 to 8 weight fly rods and line. Catch & release regulations for "wild" steelhead.

- Spinners: Mepps, daredevil, roostertail, cast master...
- Flies: Green butted skunk, skunk, maribou skunk, muddler minnow...
- Plugs: Hotshots, Wiggle Warts, Hot'N'Tots...

Fishing Licenses

An Idaho and/or Oregon fishing license is required depending on which shore you fish from. You can fish from the rafts or drift boats with either an Idaho or Oregon license. Steelhead permits are required in addition to a license.

Idaho License. You can purchase an Idaho fishing license and tackle in Cambridge before the trip. You can also purchase an Idaho license by contacting the Idaho Fish & Game. 800-554-8685, or www.state.ID.US/Fishgame Cost is \$12.75 for the first day, and \$6/day for each additional day. A Junior License is required for 14-17 years of age and costs \$13.75/teen/season. An Idaho license is required for people 14 years of age and older. Kids 13 and younger can fish without a license so long as they are accompanied by a licensed adult.

Oregon License. You can purchase an Oregon fishing license by contacting Oregon Dept. of Fish and Wildlife. 503-947-6000, www.dfw.state.or.us Cost is \$12/daily, \$22.50/2days; \$33/3 days; \$43.50/4days, and \$43.75/7 days. An Oregon license is required for anyone 14 years or older.