

# Leech Lake – Minnesota’s Fishing Hot Spot

**LEECH LAKE, MN** - Ivan Paulsen, a former Fishery Biologist for the state of California, has been vacationing in the Leech Lake area since 1997. Paulsen and his family enjoyed the fishing (and the area, in general) so much that he retired here in 2007.

Ever since, Paulsen (along with nearly every other fisherman who’s dipped their lines into ‘Leech’), have been reeling-in “lunkers.”

As one of the largest lakes in the state of Minnesota (112,000 surface acres), Leech Lake offers an extensive variety of fishing adventures and is home to species like record largemouth bass, trophy-sized muskie, perch, crappie, northern pike and, of course, walleye.

“I’ve fished here for years and it’s as good as, if not better, than any other place I’ve fished before,” said Paulsen. “I’ve been everywhere from Ontario to California and I can tell you that, in the past year, the fishing on Leech Lake has been absolutely phenomenal.”

Doug Schultz, of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources’ (DNR) Walker fisheries office echoes Paulsen. “Without a doubt, Leech Lake was the hottest walleye destination in 2008.”

“Last year, we had reports of fisherman catching more than 200 fish a day,” said Paulsen. “That’s typically unheard of, but the fishing on Leech Lake is *that* good.”

Renowned Leech Lake fishing guide Al Maas has been guiding on Leech for more than 40 years and he predicts that it will be *the* destination of choice for walleye fishing again in 2009.

“Last year (2008) there were a couple of days where people were catching 50-75 walleye a day,” said Maas. “The bite here is as good as anywhere in the country, if not better.”

Maas added, “Walleye of all sizes were biting...small, mid-length and all the way up to 31 inches...it wasn’t uncommon to see several upwards of 20 inches.”

Resort owners agree.

“From fishing opener through the close of the season,” said Bailey’s Resort owner Dana Pitt, “Leech has been THE destination for fishermen across the state and country. Other lakes are hit and miss. Here, you can fish all summer long.”

While walleye fishing has been Leech Lake’s most recent bright spot, it’s no secret that Leech Lake has been known to produce record setting largemouth bass and muskie, amongst a variety of other species.

According to Schultz, the diversity of shoreline and variations in depth on Leech Lake allow for ideal spawning and natural reproduction habits among all species.

“There’s no doubt Leech Lake has been and will continue to be a hot spot for pounding walleye in 2009,” Maas notes, “Leech really opened the world to largemouth bass fishing years ago...but, really, all the other species all thriving, too.”

Schultz added, "Here, they grow fast and they get big."

Leech Lake also prides itself on its convenient, yet remote location. In fact, fishermen from across the Midwest (and country) make Leech Lake a fishing destination each year.

"We see people from Iowa, Indiana, Illinois, Nebraska, Wisconsin, and, of course, Minnesota," said Pitt.

"It's a big lake that's not overly developed," said Paulsen. "It almost feels like there's nothing around...it's not a crowded lake by any means."

Maas adds, "It's definitely a low pressure lake. There's plenty of room on Leech Lake for every boat imaginable."

The town of Walker adds another dimension to the fishing experience at Leech Lake. Conveniently situated on the shores of Leech Lake, Walker offers a plethora of shopping, dining and lodging venues, making Leech Lake the ideal fishing destination for 2009.

"If last year's reports are any indicator of the quality of fishing here on Leech Lake, its going be another great year," said Pitt.

**For more information about Leech Lake fishing, please contact the Leech Lake Tourism Bureau at 800-735-3297.**

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## **Leech Lake Fishing Tips**

*Seasonal patterns and presentations for walleye, northern pike, muskie, bass, perch, sunfish, crappie and eelpout.*

Information provided by Leech Lake's legendary fishing guide and MN Fishing Hall of Fame inductee, Al Maas.

### **Walleye**

Fishing is as good as it's been in decades and 2009 should be even better. Expect to catch a lot of fish from 14" to 25". *Note – there is a 4 fish limit, with an 18" to 26" protected slot, and one over 26" allowed.*

**Spring:** Location is fairly simple – points, shorelines and shallow flats of 10' or less.

Nothing fancy, basic jigs & minnows – particularly shiners – are hard to beat. Try these jigs – Northland Stand-up Fireball, Bait Rigs Odd-Ball jigs; colors – green/chart, lime green, blue/white, orange/black, gold.

Rigging – 36"-48" Roach or Lindy rigs – try minnows, leeches and crawlers, keep sinker as light as possible while still maintaining bottom contact

**Summer:** Locations can be flats, rock reefs, points and shorelines where the wind is blowing in. Cabbage weeds will also hold fish, along with deeper weedlines and humps.

Pitch jigs & minnows or Gulp into cabbage weeds – try Northland Weed Weasel jigs

Rigging – try rainbow minnows but expect better productivity from leeches and crawlers on Roach Rigs or Northland spinners. *Tip.... one of the most productive presentations has been a 48" gold spinner on a 1 ½ or 2 oz. bottom bouncer with a Berkley Power Worm or Gulp crawler in natural color.*

Crankbaits - #5, #7 & #8 Shad Raps, Salmo Hornets and Bullheads, or Berkley Frenzies. Colors – crawfish, perch, shiner, blue/silver, chartreuse, firetiger. *Tip.... dusk into dark is an extremely productive time, but cranks will work all day long also.*

### **Muskie**

Leech Lake has been world-famous for its monster muskie ever since the legendary muskie rampage, when dozens of fish were caught during a hot, calm spell in July 1955. Due to catch and release practices, today the lake produces even more big fish over 50 inches than it did decades ago.

**Spring:** Fish are migrating from spawning areas to summer habitat. Look for 6'-8' cabbage weeds or areas of heavy perch concentrations. Use trolling motor and sight fish.

When located, pitch bass creatures or bigger jigs in front of them. Small topwater lures, small cranks and bucktails will also trigger them.

**Summer:** Fish are now on all kinds of structure – weed beds, sand bars, rock reefs and open water.

Increase the size of lures and use all types. Be sure to try topwater, twitch baits, bucktails with trailers, Bulldawgs and troll bigger crankbaits like Jakes, Grandmas, Magnum Cisco Kids and Depthriders. Jerkbait like Suicks, Reef Hawgs, and Wade's Wobblers work well. Bucktails like Hawg Spins, M&G, Cowgirls, and Eagletails are good. *Tip.... Fish low light periods – dawn & dusk, cloudy days, windy days and stormy weather.*

### **Bass**

If you are looking for quality largemouth bass fishing - look no further – Leech Lake will not disappoint you. The average size is on par with the top bass fisheries in the nation. Catch and release is advised in order to maintain this great fishing.

Boy Bay and River, Headquarters Bay, Sucker Bay and River, Shingobee Bay, Waboose Bay, Leech River, Steamboat Bay and Moonlight Bay are all prime bass areas. Other smaller bay areas with heavy cover are also scattered around the lake. *Tip.... Leech Lake bass are shallow, slop fish all year – rarely deeper than 4'. Shallow, heavy cover is the key and 35#-50# braided line is needed to pull them out.*

**Spring:** Fish shorelines, bogs, cattails, reeds and wild rice beds. Jig & pig in black/blue and crawfish colors are great. Salamanders and tubes will also work well.

**Summer:** Fish the same areas but concentrate on pockets, points and outside edges as the emergent vegetation becomes more prevalent. Throw Northland Jawbreaker spoons into heavy cover to locate fish. If they blow-up on the spoon and miss, then follow-up with a jig & pig, tube jig, jigworm, etc. Overcast days are best because the fish are more active out on the edges of cover.