

OZAUKEE COUNTY TOURISM

Reel in an adventure off the coast of Port Washington



Photos courtesy of Ozaukee County Tourism Council

Left, fishing poles line the side of a charter boat as the sun comes up over Lake Michigan. Right, a group shows off their haul after a day of charter fishing.

PORT WASHINGTON — Ozaukee County's location on the coast of Lake Michigan offers many advantages, including miles of beautiful beaches, amazing bluff views and ample opportunities for recreation. Sport fishing is one of Lake Michigan's lures, and local fishing charters enjoy thriving businesses as visitors take to the water not only for the excitement of recreational fishing, but also for relaxation and the opportunity to socialize and bond with friends and family.

Wisconsin's charter fishing season kicks off in April, and Port Washington's marina, hotels and restaurants are already enjoying the bustling activity of anglers coming into town to head out into the open water.

"We're proud to say we're Lake Michigan's number one salmon and trout destination with small town feels and big town amenities," said Sharon Scheel, spokesperson for the Charter Captains Association of Port Washington (CCAPW) and owner of Nicky Boy Charter Fishing Service LLC, the largest fleet operating out of Port Washington.

"The CCAPW is the association that oversees the more than 30 fishing charters operating out of the Port Washington marina. While most individual boats book their charter trips directly, the association brings all the owners together to ensure the fishing and tourism industries support each other and work together.

"Our customers are our business, and we work together to make sure everyone has a positive experience," said Scheel. "Each of our boats is licensed by the U.S. Coast Guard to carry up to six guests, plus the captain and the mate. But when we're moving into the busy season, or we're booking for larger groups like corporate events or family or school reunions, it's important that we work together to accommodate larger groups."

Port Washington fishing charters work seven days a

week from April through October. Morning, afternoon and all-day charters are available, as well as multiple day trips, and some of the boats offer after-hour sunset cruises as well.

"Weekends in the summer can get pretty busy," Scheel said, "but we do whatever we can to accommodate our guests. Local guests and those who are coming shorter distances often prefer to book during the week — weekdays allow for a little more spontaneity, better availability and a somewhat more relaxed experience than busy weekends."

Port Washington's charter boats are equipped with the latest advances in navigational and fishing electronics, and provide rods and reels as well as tackle for their guests. They will also professionally clean and bag the day's catch for their customers, although they're always happy to take the opportunity to teach guests the tricks of the trade when asked.

Positive experiences and successful hauls are the goals.

"We're in the business of fun," said John Iverson of Iverson Sportfishing LLC. "I've seen the look on someone's face when they land a king salmon ... you can't tell me they're not having fun! But some of the best times are happening between bites — when friends and families are just hanging together and enjoying their time on the boat."

Lake Michigan's cool waters and the quick drop off the coast of Port Washington makes it the perfect natural habitat for a variety of fish.

"The fishing on Lake Michigan is fantastic, it's one of the best inland fishing bodies of water I've ever been on," said Jerry Plyer, president of the Great Lakes Sport Fishermen of Ozaukee County. Plyer's group works closely with the Wisconsin DNR to help keep Lake Michigan stocked naturally with salmon and to keep the fish off the coast of Port Washington healthy

and abundant.

In cooperation with the DNR, every spring the group holds as many as 80,000 baby chinook salmon (called "fries,") in net pens for up to three weeks to ensure their safety and to encourage them to imprint on the local waters. This process, called smolting, replicates the process salmon go through in the wild, where they imprint on an area, and at maturity swim upstream to return to their place of birth. This process ensures that many mature chinook salmon return to the area year after year.

"Lake trout is the only species native to Lake Michigan," Plyer said. "But through the smolting process we've created a robust community of chinook salmon. Coho salmon and trout are also raised at the hatchery and get direct-stocked into the lake. This ensures a healthy stock of fish year after year. And any angler will tell you, there's no better tasting fish than one you've pulled into the boat yourself."

But as a good corporate partner, Port Washington boat owners realize their town offers a lot more than just great fishing.

"My favorite call is someone who has never been fishing on Lake Michigan," said Captain Chad Biersach of C&D Charters. "When they

ask me to tell them about my charter, I always start off with how much Port Washington has to offer for a small town. The restaurants, bars, parks and shops all located within walking distance of my boats are a huge draw for a lot of people. It's a small town with big city amenities."

"Sure, providing an outstanding fishing trip is our first priority," Scheel said. "But once you're back on land, or if you have members of your party who aren't interested in fishing, there's plenty to do in Port. Shopping and dining, visiting our pubs and breweries, biking along the Interurban trail, visiting our neighboring towns. It's all part of the experience."

Ready to reel in your own adventure? Whether you're a sports fishing enthusiast or a family looking for a fun experience together, make the most of your day on the lake by booking a charter in advance.

A list of charter businesses operating out of Port Washington can be found at portwashingtoncharterfishing.com, including Nicky Boy Charters at nickyboycharters.com; Iverson at iversonsportfishing.com and C&D Charters at cdcharters.com. Anyone 16 and older will need a fishing license from the Wisconsin

Department of Natural Resources — they're easy to get and can even be done from your phone for immediate use. Then prepare for your adventure by packing a cooler and plenty of sunscreen and bug spray, and an extra layer of clothes — even sunny days can be cool and windy on the Lake.

"We want everyone to enjoy the journey," Scheel said. "Catching fish is our first priority ... the added benefits are the camaraderie, the serenity and the memories made along the way."

For information on exploring Ozaukee County, visit

www.ozaukeetourism.com and follow the Ozaukee County Tourism Facebook page. For more information about tourism opportunities in Port Washington, visit www.visitportwashington.com and www.downtownport.com. On behalf of the Ozaukee County Tourism Council, thank you for helping to make Ozaukee County a wonderful place for all to live, work and visit.

(The Ozaukee County Tourism Council is a group of businesses and organizations that support and promote tourism in Ozaukee County.)

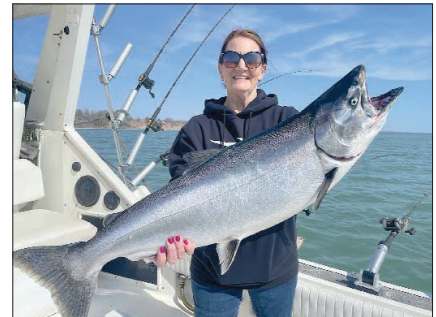


Photo courtesy of Ozaukee County Tourism Council

Karen Baker Schrap holds a large spring king salmon she caught in the waters of Lake Michigan.

ADOPT A PET

Boyd is not just a cute face! I am a 28 pound, 5-month-old pup who is a bit shy. So, I am looking for a quiet home where I can acclimate at my own pace and grow into the playful, loving pup I know I am. I promise to try to be a good listener and I certainly have the ears for it! I'm really a very good boy and am available for adoption at the WFS Petting Zoo. I live all alone at WFS. I've been

Mittens! I'm a 2-year-old pretty and petite kitty, weighing just 5 pounds. I am a silver stunner who enjoys relaxing in any comfortable space and purring nonstop when receiving gentle pets. I prefer to live without other cats so I can relish in all the attention you

Snickers is as sweet as candy! I am a 2-year-old Guinea Pig and am personable, communicative and enjoy interaction with people. With good genes, a proper diet, a clean & spacious habitat, and daily mental & physical stimulation, my lifespan can reach 5-7 years. Most of us guinea pigs do very well