Successful Boat Fishing On Southern Lakes

General Tips:

Anglers trolling or fishing may have up to 200 lbs of line trailing behind their boat. Give them plenty of room before releasing the line into the water.

Trolling: A downrigger is used to troll in the water, either alone or as a part of a net. It can be used to target fish in specific areas or to cover a large area. Downriggers can be used either on the surface or below the surface, depending on the depth of the water.

Angling: Angling is the art of fishing with a hook and line. It can be done from a boat or from the shore. Angling is a popular form of fishing in Southern Lakes, and it involves using a line, a hook, and fish bait to catch fish.

Top Ten Quick Tips For Success:
1. Familiarise yourself with the area first.
2. Start in deep water and then move to the fishing area after the rolling gear is out.
3. Drop-offs, river and stream outlet areas and lagoons are prime areas to fish.
4. Sudden changes in lakebed shape, such as points of holes, tend to be a sign of fish activity.
5. Use the sounder and landmarks to stay at the chosen depth and to plan how to roll off.
6. Match your length and weight to water clarity - the deeper the water, the longer and lighter the line.
7. The best strike zone is within 2m of the bottom.
8. Very usefully speed and direction.
9. When a fish is hooked, slow the boat and stop any runs to enable it to be retrieved.
10. Re-check areas where you have hooked or caught trout as they travel in groups.

The Golden rule is that the line needs to be close to the bottom (within 1-2 metres). Select the depth you want to target and then start along the lake drop-off following this depth contour. As a rule of thumb, allow at least 6 inches of slack between the line and the boat. This will allow you to change the speed of the boat and adjust your line tension as needed. When you are fishing, always keep the line reasonably tight to ensure that you can detect any fish activity immediately. If the line is too slack, fish may not have the opportunity to feel your bait properly. Similarly, if the line is too tight, fish may be deterred from taking the bait. When you find a fish, gently reel in the line to bring it closer to the boat. Try not to spook the fish by pulling the line too quickly. Once the fish is close enough, you can use a net to catch it.
Standard Trolling Rig: The most basic trolling rig used is simply a spinner in the end of a threaded, which is tossed over the back of the boat and dragged around at random. This will catch fish, with a lot of luck and not a lot of consistency. Get the basics right with rigging and you can dramatically improve your chances of success.

Fly and spinner combination: Many of the huge range of spinners available have a lot of action in the water and are great for attracting fish from quite a sizeable distance. Due to our lakes being very clear, fish do get to have a very good look at the lure before deciding whether or not to strike. Fish will often be drawn in to look at a lure with a great action, but then put off at the last minute as it doesn’t look real enough. This is where the fly comes in; it is less intimidating, more realistic and more often than not, taken in preference to the spinner.

Length and weight of trace material: Again, because of the clear water, trace length and weight is crucial to success. This is especially important when harling or leadlining. The trace from the end of your trolling line (eg. leadline) should be a minimum of 5m in length and needs to be no heavier than 6kg. Use good quality monofilament that has low diameter and is supple. Supple line allows your lure to swim more freely in the water giving it a far better action to attract fish. Always use a lighter weight trace between your swivel and your fly and spinner. This means if you snag one lure or the other you are less likely to lose the whole rig.

Downriggers: Downriggers can be used to target any depth with accuracy, depending on the length of downrigger cable. They are a bit fiddly to use at first, but you can soon develop a manly routine. Use a light, flexible rod and reel filled with 3-4kg monofilament. To set:

1. Move the boat ahead slowly.
2. Let out approximately 30-50m of line.
3. Put the rod in the rod holder.
4. Slide the fishing line into the clip on the downrigger.
5. Disengage the reel so that line can run out freely, keeping control so it doesn’t overrun or tangle.
6. Lower the downrigger bail slowly to the desired depth (the fishing line should run freely of the spool).
7. Put the reel into gear and gently wind in the slack line until you get a good bend in the rod (be careful not to pull the line from the clip).
8. When a fish strikes, the line will pull out of the clip and the rod straighten to take up the slack.

Jigging: Use a light, fast action rod and freestop reel filled with 3-4kg monofilament. Let your weight or lure to the bottom and move it gently up and down. Regularly check that the weight is touching the bottom and let out more line if necessary. It is often easier to fish with the reel out of gear so extra line can be regularly released - just keep your thumb on the spool so that you can strike any fish. If the angle of your line streams past 30 degrees wind up and start again. Some strikes are obvious, but fish will often pick up the lure or fly as it is fluttering down. If you sense something is not quite right, clamp your thumb down on the spool and strike sharply.

Harling: Use a very fast sinking flyline or 10 metres of leadline joined to at least 100m of dacron or monofilament backing material. Alternatively, you can use an ordinary spinning setup with a small lead sinker 1m above your fly/flies to take the line down. Put out most of the flyline or the leadline plus 15-20m of backing. Target sandy areas or channels amongst weed beds less than 10m deep, or on a deep shoreline, stick very close to the bank. When harling you want to be moving as slow as possible, therefore it is an ideal method to use from a rowboat or canoe, especially on smaller lakes.

HOT SPOTS

WAITAKI LAKES

Lake Benmore: The lake is divided into two arms formed by the flooding of the Ahuriri and Waitaki rivers. The Ahuriri Arm between Oamaru and Otematata, and the Haddon Arm, East of Twizel offer safe family camping and fishing. Best fished by trolling a spinner or feathered lure in the shallows around the tributary stream mouths especially the Ahuriri and Tekapo River deltas. Popular trolling lures for all three lakes include: Tasmanian Devil, Ropalas and the ever useful black and gold Toby.

Lake Aviemore: Lake Aviemore is completely encircled by tar sealed roads leading to 5 concrete ramps two of these incorporating deep water anchorages and a jetty. A popular trolling lake, the preferred areas are around the Otematata River mouth, Ragged Ridges, and Parsons Rock. Rainbow and Brown trout are available with the occasional chinook salmon also being caught. Early morning and evening around the northern bays before the water toys and bow boats begin to move can also be rewarding.

Lake Waitaki: Lake Waitaki is the oldest of the Hydro Lakes, it is less popular than the larger lakes to the west but produces both brown and rainbow trout. Trees remain in the lake, many of these submerged. On a low lake these can be visible, but at other times they lie hidden from view and boating should be aware of their location. Lake Waitaki is primarily a shallow lake excepting for the old river channel which meanders through the middle towards Waitaki dam. Trolling is successful along most of the shore line except the deep water areas near the Waitaki Dam. The lake level can alter markedly due to electricity demand. The most used launching ramp is at Fishermans Bend camping area below Lake Aviemore on the northern shore.

Lake Dunstan: Lake Dunstan is suited to most trolling methods, but the one that consistently catches more fish than any other is harling. The Clutha arm is the most popular and productive area of the lake, and, despite all the bad press we here about lageremyth, close to the weed banks is where you will find most of the fish. If the weedy areas aren’t producing for you, try a deeper fishing method such as leadline or downrigger along the eastern shoreline around some of the rocky points.

Lake Hawea: All methods are suitable here, with downrigger and leadlining being most popular. As with all of the glacial lakes, it is very deep, and the productive zones for fishing are all close to the edge, with the exception of the head of the lake, which is shallow for quite a distance from the shore. Hotspots are the Neck, with its varied terrain, all of the river mouths, Silver Island and the "gut" directly off the Dingle Drum on average 20-40m of water.

Lake Wanaka: Similar to Hawea in that all methods can be used. From Glenorchy Bay there is easy access to Paddock Bay and the Matukikihi River Delta. From Wanaka township Stevenson’s Arm is the place to head, but the best fishing of all is at the head of the lake on the Makarora Delta.

Lake Wakatipu: There is good fishing right in Frankton Arm, especially at dawn and dusk when other activities settle down. The delta area around Glenorchy is very productive and from there you have good access to the Greenstone and Von River mouths. In the Kingston Arm there are a number of stream mouths with terrific drop-offs into deep water, just made for jiggling or downriggering.

Lake Tekapo: Tekapo is Southland’s most popular lake fishery, the largest lake in the province and has the longest shoreline of any New Zealand lake. Use of downriggers has yet to really gain popularity, but would increase your success. The South Arm is by far the most popular, but this has more to do with proximity to the boat harbour than the quality of the fishing. For a change of scene try one of the other arms, or along the Eastern shore.

Lake Manapouri: Lake Manapouri has more shallow productive areas than Te Anau and receives less angling pressure despite being a better fishery. The extensive flats from Frazers Beach right around to Shallow Bay are well worth investigating. As with Te Anau, stream mouths are also hot spots. An increasing number of land-locked Chinook salmon may add an unexpected bonus to your day.

Lake Monowai: Monowai provides yet more variety, having had its levels raised early last century, which flooded the forest margins. These dead trees now provide a vast amount of habitat for small fish such as bullies and galaxids. Fishing as close to the tree skeletons as possible will reward anglers, and dawn or dusk provides the best opportunity for that fish of a lifetime!