



Sons of Norway
HERITAGE PROGRAMS



MiniPresentation#47

SALMON FISHING

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Norway is an angler's paradise with more than 240 salmon rivers. About one hundred of those are big rivers which carry considerable stocks of fish. Millionaires compete for the privilege of getting a license to fish in some of them, while other rivers provide fishing opportunities for ordinary mortals at more democratic rates.

The salmon come in from the Atlantic Ocean and go up the rivers along the Norwegian coastline to spawn in fresh running water. In many cases the fish travel inland into the very heart of the country. The big, silvery fish jump and conquer considerable waterfalls on their way until they are stopped by a dam or a waterfall too high to defeat.

The sport of trying to catch the salmon on its way up the river has been going on in Norway for more than 150 years. It was British gentlemen who first discovered the opportunities for exciting sports fishing in Norway, and for generations they rented the best rivers for most of the season, returning year after year in search of excitement and always hoping to catch THE biggest salmon of them all. In time they were joined by angling enthusiasts from the European continent, American millionaires, and of course also the Norwegians themselves who discovered that there was more to salmon fishing than putting food on the table.

The largest salmon ever caught with rod and line in Norway was taken from the Tana River in northern Norway more than 50 years ago and weighed just over 81 pounds. Sixty pounders are not uncommon, and almost every summer 45 to 55 pounders are landed. The high average of large catches explains to some extent the popularity of Norwegian rivers among the world's most ambitious anglers. Other factors are the strong current and the small pools. Norwegian rivers are much more ferocious than most other salmon rivers. It is no Sunday school trip to try to land a determined and steel-muscled salmon on its way to the spawning grounds. The fish can put up a pretty good fight, and the angler needs to be in good shape to land it.

Norway's waterways have been damaged by acid rain from the Continent and the British Isles. Still, compared to the pollution in most European rivers, Norwegian rivers are in relatively good shape. Norway's extensive hydro-electric developments have caused problems, since the water level in many rivers has been dramatically reduced and the ecological processes disturbed. But the big threat to the stock of salmon has been the fishing that takes place at sea. A great number of salmon never reach the spawning grounds, and a considerable number of fish are also severely damaged by nets. Restrictions on salmon fishing with net in later years seems to have paid off—reports are optimistic. The stock of fish has improved in most rivers and many biggies are caught.

If you are an angler and want to try your hand at salmon fishing the next time you go to Norway, check with the locals on where to get a fishing license. With that in your pocket you can safely chase salmon—and your fisherman's dreams.