

# FISHING HOLE

## ROSE LAKE



**WHY GO:** This border lake is home to a low population of larger lake trout and is a destination for trophy lakers, particularly in the winter and spring. There's also some nice smallmouth bass worth targeting in the open-water period of the year.

**ACCESS:** It's not easy getting to Rose in the winter, the 77-rod portage of which from Duncan Lake to Rose includes the well-known "Stairway Portage," including a steep staircase descent to Rose. Dave Seaton, of Hungry Jack Canoe Outfitters, said there's a fair amount of traffic to the lake in the winter because of its trophy potential. "If you are dragging a sled, you have to worry about it getting away," he mentioned of the staircase. The portage from entry point Bearskin Lake is 81 rods.

There is typically thin ice in the channel above Stairway Portage, Seaton cautioned, but there's typically a winter path parallel to the channel. "That is the after route," he said.

Seaton mentioned that some have accessed the lake with snowmobiles on the Canada side, but he cautioned the difficulty in doing this without crossing over the border.

**VITALS:** The U.S. portion of this 1,410-acre border lake is in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. It has a maximum depth of 90 feet, according to Minnesota

DNR's Lakefinder application, as well as an average clarity of 17.4 feet.

**GAME SPECIES PRESENT:** Bluegill, burbot, green sunfish, lake trout, lake whitefish, smallmouth bass, tullibee, walleye, yellow perch, white sucker and rainbow smelt.

**BIG LAKERS:** Minnesota DNR hasn't surveyed the lake since 1987, according to the Lakefinder application. Even then, biologists noted a low abundance of lake trout, but some big ones, still. That apparently has remained true, Seaton said, noting that he knows of customers that head back to Rose in the winter and spring trout seasons.

It's not uncommon for anglers to catch lake trout between 8 and 12 pounds, Seaton said.

But generally anglers here are searching for that one big fish all day.

It's a rare day when anglers aren't able to catch four or five of the fish in a day, he said, noting a 30-incher that was caught on the lake recently.

The population seems to be so top-heavy, Seaton said, that anglers have a tough time catching lakers on Rose that fall into the eater category.

"It is a good problem to have, depending on your perspective," he said.

Though the lake is partially in Canada, the entire U.S. portion lies inside the BW-CAW, so the winter trout season begins on Jan. 1, and runs through March 31.

**SMALLIES, TOO:** During the open-water season, smallmouth bass are worth targeting, Seaton said, noting the presence of nice smallies.

"Four pounds is not uncommon," he said.

There are some wider, shallower flats just north of the portage entry from Daniels. These might be worth working for smallmouth bass.

**THE REST:** While the lake has a number of cold-water species apparently present, such as burbot, whitefish and cisco, DNR also lists species such as northern pike and walleyes.

Seaton assumes there are a few northerns in the lake, though he's never gotten a report back of anyone catching either pike (or walleyes, for that matter) in the lake.

**EXTRA CREDIT:** There are some sheltered

campsites that winter campers would likely prefer, Seaton said, as well as some more exposed sites that make living conditions tough for winter campers.

Seaton recommended checking out the Border Route Trail via the portage from Duncan.

"It is cool in the summer to hike up there, but it is really cool in the winter, with no leaves and snow everywhere," he said. "It is well worth the effort."

He also recommended checking out the falls going into Rose.

"The water goes year round, but there is a big carapace (of ice) on top," he said. "It changes all of the time. It is never the same twice." —*Javier Serna*

**View all our Fishing Hole Maps at:**  
[northernwilds.com/fishingholemaps](http://northernwilds.com/fishingholemaps)