

# FISHING HOLE TEMPERANCE RIVER

BY JOE SHEAD

**WHY GO:** The Temperance River gets good runs of spring steelhead in its lower section. The middle to upper stretches holds native brook trout, plus, you may find coolwater species such as smallmouth bass, walleyes and northern pike in the upper reaches. This scenic river boasts several gorgeous waterfalls and winds through a wilderness-like setting that holds untapped fishing potential.

**ACCESS:** You can access Temperance River from several road crossings. For steelhead in the lower reaches, park at the wayside rest stop where Highway 61 crosses the river at Temperance River State Park between Schroeder and Tofte. If you want to pursue brook trout farther upstream, you might try along a small U.S. Forest Service Campground where the river crosses the Sawbill Trail. To get there from Tofte, travel about 13 miles up the Sawbill. The campground is on your left, just past Pancore Lake Road. There are a few road crossings along The Grade as well.

**VITALS:** Temperance River flows out of the west side of Brule Lake in the Boundary Waters. From there, it flows through a handful of Boundary Waters lakes as it makes its way south toward Lake Superior. The river flows 39 miles. It's slower in its upper reaches, where it flows through several lakes. At the middle, it courses through many rocky runs. Near the mouth, this swift river has cut through the bedrock over eons of time. As a result, the river cascades down many waterfalls and runs through deep gorges.

The river allegedly got its name because the swift flow prevented sediment from building up and forming a gravel "bar" at the mouth. "It supports an anadromous migratory fishery within the first barrier falls in the park," said Matthew Weberg, assistant area fisheries supervisor. "It doesn't hold a lot of good spawning habitat, but it draws in a lot of fish because it puts out a lot of water."

**GAME SPECIES PRESENT:** Steelhead, salmon, brook trout, walleye, smallmouth bass, yellow perch and northern pike.

**STEELHEAD:** "Steelhead numbers are average to a little below average," Weberg said. The area between the mouth and first barrier are all within Temperance River State Park, providing access all along the river. Plus, there is plenty of casting room. The only problem is, this section of river isn't very long. Weberg said spring steelhead anglers may occasionally catch a splake or brown trout.

**SALMON:** In the fall, starting in September, you'll likely encounter pink salmon below the barrier. Later, cohos and an occasional chinook may turn up.

**BROOK TROUT:** "The inland portion is all brook trout water," Weberg said. "We do regular water temperature monitoring during the summer. It gets stressfully warm for brook trout by July through August. Some tributaries provide cooler water." Weberg said some tributaries, such as Heartbreak Creek, Sixmile Creek and Blind Temperance

Creek, attract brookies when the main river gets too warm and they also hold their own populations of trout. "We've seen the best brook trout numbers as you head further inland into some of those sections that have tributary streams," Weberg said. "A brook trout in excess of 12 inches is certainly a possibility." Weberg noted the river is fairly wide and wadable, making for decent casting. He recommends anglers target trout early in the season before warm water stresses fish.

**OTHER FISH:** The upper reaches of the Temperance River hold a coolwater fishery, consisting of walleyes, smallmouth bass, yellow perch, northern pike and a few other common area species. These species are found within the lakes through which the river flows, but they can be found in the river as well. Many of these lakes lie within the Boundary Waters and haven't been surveyed in decades, but old lake surveys often indicate good populations of walleyes and smallmouth bass. "It's a well-connected system," Weberg said. "It's got numerous lakes in the system. As you get up from the lake, there's really no barriers other than beaver dams. There are a lot of stretches of the Temperance that aren't very accessible and could yield some pretty awesome wilderness fishing."



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