



Get Started: Ice Fishing

A RESOLUTELY NORTHERN PURSUIT, ICE FISHING IS A FUN winter activity that also allows plenty of time for socializing between parents and children, relatives and friends. And there's always a good chance of bringing home fresh fish for dinner.

THE SEASON

Ice fishing begins when about 6 inches of good, hard ice form on lakes and ponds. Most years, the season will be in full swing in mid-January. Check ice conditions and do not venture onto unknown ice alone. Never drive a motor vehicle on the ice.

WHAT'S NEEDED

- An auger to drill holes and at least one handline or ice-fishing rod to jig with.
- Warm clothes, particularly on your head, hands and feet. Disposable warming packs are also a great help.
- A 5-gallon bucket is a necessity, both to sit on and to bring home fish with.
- A sled to pull coolers, cookstoves and other gear.
- Bait, equipment, shanty rentals and guided trips are available near many bodies of water. Contact the Vermont Outdoor Guide Association at www.voga.org or call (800) 425-8747 for information. You can also check www.vtfishandwildlife.com for a list of bait shops for selected lakes and ponds.
- Plan on a couple of hours on the ice for your first trip; you can catch plenty of fish in that time.

HOT SPOTS

- In the northwest, the Champlain Islands offer good access and small bays that freeze early and a variety of species like perch, pike and smelt.
- In the Northeast Kingdom, in addition to Lake Memphremagog, Lake Willoughby is a favorite for its propensity to surrender monster lake trout.
- The smaller lakes in the Woodbury-Calais region, Lake Bomoseen in the Rutland region and Harriman Reservoir in southern Vermont are all top spots.

RULES & REGS

- Those age 15 and older need a fishing license. Call the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department at (802) 241-3700 for license information.
- A digest of Vermont's fishing laws is available where fishing licenses are sold — mostly general stores and town clerks' offices — or on the department's website. The digest contains maps, too. 🍷

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