



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Fishing News

Conservation and Recreation



Top Fall Trout Fishing Destinations

Get out and explore northeast Iowa this fall. Enjoy fewer visitors, cool weather and spectacular displays of autumn colors, including Iowa's prize trout.

There's a perfect trout fishing spot for everyone – whether you are a beginner, go several times a year or just enjoy the great views.

Here's a few of our favorite spots:

Great for beginners

- [Fountain Springs](#), Delaware County – this drive through park is a great spot for beginners to try trout fishing; catch stocked brook and rainbow trout along with a few wild browns. With long stretches of shallow bedrock riffle, look for the few deeper pools and runs to hold most of the larger trout. Trout here are mostly 6- to 12 inches; use live bait or artificial presentations.
- [Patterson Creek](#), Allamakee County – beginners can cast freely without getting hung up in trees or overhanging vegetation thanks to in-stream habitat and bank stabilization habitat improvements. About 1.4 miles of stream is on private property open to fishing; excellent stream access. Catch lots of wild brown trout with 10- to 12-inch trout common. Domestic rainbow and brook trout are stocked weekly. Let your lure or bait drift around the boulders in deeper holes and just in front of the rock ledges.

Most picturesque views

- [Hickory Creek](#), Allamakee County – admire fall beauty around every corner in the scenic Yellow River Valley. Stocked weekly through October with catchable rainbow

and brook trout. Catch wild brown trout up to 17 inches. This stream is on private property with portions open only to fishing. Use small emerging mayfly and midge patterns under the limestone ledges. For deeper, slower pools, use a spinnerbait or a hook tipped with a small piece of worm or artificial baits, such as trout or salmon eggs.

- [Richmond Springs](#), Delaware County – it is hard to match the picturesque views of winding roads and nature's colorful display of leaves in [Backbone Park](#) along the road to one of Iowa's most popular trout streams. Iowa's oldest State Park offers easy access and many recreational opportunities. Use jigs, spinners, prepared bait and live bait. Most trout here are 10- to 12-inches.

Bring the whole family

- [Pine Spring Creek](#), Winneshiek County – this hidden gem, home to a restored population of South Pine strain brook trout, meanders two miles through the [Seed Savers Exchange Heritage Farm](#). Plan plenty of time to walk through the gardens, tour the visitor's center and hike along eight miles of trails. Find a variety of habitat types from deeper pools, to limestone ledges, to long shallow riffles. Bring along a variety of minnow, creek chub, or crawdad imitation lures or flies. Brook trout must be [caught and released](#). You can only use artificial lures.
- [Swiss Valley](#), Dubuque County – catch stream-reared browns as well as stocked rainbows at Catfish Creek in [Swiss Valley Preserve and Campground](#) near the attractions and convenience provided by the City of Dubuque. A well-developed trail provides fishing access into an area known for fall beauty. Use nightcrawlers, plastics, spinners and jigs in the large pools and along bank hides. Most trout here are 8- to 13-inches with a chance to catch a few large (16-inch) browns.

Up for a challenge

- [Lansing Wildlife Management Area](#), Allamakee County – test your trout fishing skills with this unnamed secluded stream's narrow, heavily overgrown channel, gin clear water and cobble substrate. Be ready for a hefty hike to get to the stream; access it from a parking area on the south side of Spring Valley Drive. Brook trout are not large, but a 6-inch trout here is considered a trophy for many. South Pine strain brook trout were stocked near the headwaters in 2012/2013 while French Creek strain brown trout fingerlings were stocked further downstream in 2009/2010.
- [Spring Branch](#), Delaware County – trout in this high quality fishery have challenged Iowa's best anglers for many decades. Catch all three species of trout found in Iowa (brook, brown, and rainbow) in a single trip. Excellent public access; you can only use artificial lures and a trout must be at least 14-inches to be kept. Great "bug hatches" make this stream especially popular with fly fishing anglers, but jigs and spinners can work, too.

Leave the crowds behind

- [Big Mill Creek](#), Jackson County – easy access to wild brown trout and stocked rainbow and brook trout in the Big Mill Wildlife Area. Spinners, jigs and live bait are preferred options here, but other tactics will work, too. Head to the lowest two-thirds of the Wildlife Area to get away from crowds; stream access is easiest in the

upstream portion of the wildlife area. Be prepared to walk on steep banks and to cast under and around shrubs and trees. Most trout here are 8- to 13-inches. Enjoy the small-town charm of Bellevue, just five miles away.

Visit a trout hatchery – great family fun

Stop by one of our [three trout hatcheries](#) - Manchester, Decorah, or Big Springs.

Here's a few things to see and do:

- Feed the fish – fun for everyone.
- Male brown and brook trout display their brightest, most vibrant colors in the fall.
- See eggs of the next generation of trout at the Manchester Fish Hatchery.
- Kids have their own trout fishing pond at the Big Spring Hatchery. Fishing poles and basic tackle is available in the shelter next to the pond.
- Just across the street from the Decorah Hatchery, you'll find Decorah's famous eagles nest.



Tips to plan your trip

Use these helpful resources to get the most out of your trout fishing trip:

- [List of Iowa trout streams](#) - find a new favorite
- [Fall color website](#) - check the weekly fall color report
- [Iowa Trout Fishing Guide](#) - map of trout streams
- [How to Fish for Trout](#) - what you need and tips & tricks
- [Trout Regulations](#) - fees, seasons, limits and special restrictions
- [Weekly Fishing Report](#) - check conditions before you go