

BERNERA FISHING GUIDE: WHERE TO FISH



1. THE SEA LOCHS (EAST LOCH ROAG, WEST LOCH ROAG AND LOCH BARRAGLOM)

The use of a boat or kayak can take you to some fantastic sea angling opportunities around Bernera. Please be aware that, whatever time of year you take to the water, the sea demands respect. Careful attention to the weather forecast is vital, as is navigation amongst the numerous submerged rocks around Loch Roag. Local knowledge, or Satnav and charts, is essential for your safety.

2. THE BEACHES AT BOSTA AND LITTLE BERNERA

Bosta and Little Bernera beaches have not been as productive as the other beaches in Lewis but will produce a few flats such as Dabs Flounders and Turbot. Most beaches in the Hebrides are fished with small mackerel groundbaits just outside the breaking surf on an ebbing tide. As the tide goes out the sandeels buried in the sand move out and the predators are waiting for them. Sea Trout as well as flats are often caught using this method. The point on the east side of Bosta beach is a good spot for spinning deep for mackerel in the tide in July and August.

3. LOCH NA MUILNE (CROIR)

This is a roadside loch in Croir with fish ranging from between 6oz to 1½lb. A butchers fly works well and so does a worm. This loch has the amazing bonus of a golden eagle's nest on the cliff beside it and will give you something to keep an eye on as well as your float. Warning: there is an old legend about two dragons at the end of the loch that chase away strangers and roar fire at them!

4. LOCH A' CHNUIC

This loch is easiest to access from the road to Bosta at a point between the Tobson fank and the Croir cattle grid. The fish are small but very plentiful up to 6oz. All methods work and it's a good loch for kids to learn to fish.

5. TOB VALASAY

The Tob became very popular with shore anglers when some cod over 20lb were caught there. This led to a lot of fishing activity for several years which unfortunately took its toll on the fish stocks. The Tob was left alone for a some decades and a few large specimens have now started appearing again. The fish here are good sport but not great for eating due to their restricted diet and lack of activity—they have very big heads and skinny bodies—so anything caught should be released after the obligatory photo. The Tob used to be home to mullet, which are notoriously difficult to catch. There are no recent reports of any being caught but if anyone out there has specialist knowledge you can have the opportunity to catch the first one. The Tob is usually fished from the shore using ground bait such as mackerel strips. Patience is required but if you do hook up prepare for a big fight. The west side is the usual fishing spot. Remember to close gates and be aware of livestock.

6. LOCH NA MUILNE (THE NORSE MILL LOCH)

This is an interesting loch to fish, with a Norse Mill at the north end and plentiful good quality fish up to 2lb. It is located to the north of Loch Na Geadraisean and is accessed in the same way from the old dump road. The best areas are the southwest and west shores, and the northeast shore where a float works well. The loch is getting weedier over the years so spinning is tricky except in the north.

7. LOCH NA GEADRAISEAN

This loch lies to the east of Loch Mor in Breacleite and is easiest to access from the dump road just in from the Kirkibost cattle grid. The road is not always open and if it is, there are big puddles to negotiate. However, there is good parking on the verges at the barrier and also further on if open. In dry weather you can take a car to the old quarry with care at low speed. Fish here are up to $\frac{3}{4}$ lb and are often in the taking mood. Worm is usually the favourite. The loch is weedy but the east and northwest coast are clearer. The south side is very muddy and shallow so best avoided.

8. KIRKIBOST LOCHS (CHOIRGAROD, GOBHLACH & NA CRAOBHAIG)

Located near Kirkipost pier with plenty parking available, the easiest way to reach these lochs is via the track from the cattle grid. There are three lochs separated by short streams and they all have good, plentiful fish from $\frac{1}{2}$ -2 $\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. The fish are lighter in colour and with fewer spots than normal and traditionally, the most southerly Loch na Craobhaig has the better fish. All methods work well, with a toby the best method for the rare monster. The west shore is usually best and the same can be said about the middle loch as well, especially around the stream. The most northerly Loch Gobhlach is in two main parts: the east part is better on the south side, with 2lb fish taken regularly, although all shores can be fished. The west part fishes better along the southwest shore and around the stream to the sea.

9. LOCH CEANNAMHOR

This is a small loch located to the west of the main road between the bridge and Breacleite. There is easy access from the road but the parking at the cattle grid is limited. The fish are small—mostly under $\frac{1}{2}$ lb—but a few larger ones may lurk also. All methods work well here, but this loch often gets overlooked due to the abundance of other good lochs on the island.

10. LOCH BHARABHAT

This is the longest loch in Bernera, with numerous bays and islands and even a Pictish broch on the east side. Both the north and south ends of the loch are within easy walking distance from the road. Fishing here is very enjoyable, and there is good quality fish, with 2lb+ being taken most years. It can often be stiff but in good conditions can surprise you. The best areas are the west side down to the south end, and the broch area on the east side northwards. Worm and fly work well but a few big ones are taken on the spinner.

11. LOCH NIOSABHAT

This is a long shallow loch between Barraglom and Kirkibost. It used to have very few fish—its name means “Miser” in Old Norse—however, it has been restocked and now you are almost guaranteed a catch. Fish are normally $\frac{1}{2}$ lb or less but 2lb fish are often seen rising mid-loch. You can fish anywhere you find deep water. A fly works very well (Soldier Palmer) and so does worm, but avoid ground bait as there are a lot of large eels. This loch may not sustain fish in the long term, so please catch and release if possible.

12. BERNERA BRIDGE AND SLIPWAY

The old bridge has always been a favourite fishing spot as it is so accessible, and it only requires some string, a weight and a mackerel trace to get a bucket of mackerel. Next to the bridge on the Bernera side is the slipway which is good for spinning for mackerel. Care must be taken on the slipway as it can be slippery and the current is strong if you end up in the water.

13. LOCH IONAIL

This is a nice small loch that is often rewarding to fish. It is accessed via a short easy walk on the south side of road to Hacklete. Fish range is up to 1½lbs, which are regularly caught, and the smaller ones are quite plentiful. The best spots are around the island and the bay on the east side. The northern part is full of lilies and almost impossible to fish. The float works well, as does a Droppen or Mepps spinner.

14. LOCH GEAL

This has been a very popular loch over the last few years due to the quality and size (3lb+) of the fish coming off it. It is located to the west of the road in Breacleite, just south of the Church of Scotland. The west and north shores are best as the east side is rocky and has electricity lines. From July onwards the loch becomes weedy and is harder to fish. Worm works with float or bottom and is very good with green coloured flies.

15. LOCH BREACLEIT (ALSO KNOWN AS LOCH MOR)

This is a large loch in Breacleite with the best fishing spots within an easy walk from the road. It has some very good fish, with the occasional one in the 4-6 pound mark being caught over the years. Most are ¾-1½lbs, which rise well to flies even in poor weather and are good fighters with pink flesh. The best areas are the island, the west shore up to the northwest bay, and Barabal's Bay in the northeast. Ground bait works well in poor weather. Fly works well on the west side and toby tempts many a 1½lb fish in the north area.