

## Fly Fishing

Although fishing is a popular sport along Montana rivers, I have never seen fish for sale in a farmers market. I asked a local fisherman, Rod Tochihara, why, and he speculated that it's because Montanans consider fishing to be something tourists do. They might catch trout to feed their own families, but they wouldn't usually bring their catch to market. In addition, wild trout quickly lose their flavor and are best eaten as soon as possible after catching.

Montana, particularly the area between Big Timber and Butte, is "probably the greatest fly-fishing destination in the lower 48," Rod told me.

The Madison River that runs near Ennis is "one of the most storied rivers in the country for fly fishermen." That is, it is full of history, with stories from the 1950s and 60s of many large fish swimming its waters, and such tales continue to lure people from all over the world to try their luck. Although there are a few areas where you can keep certain sizes of trout, fly fishing along the Madison is often pure sport, with fishermen releasing their catches back into the water.

In Rod's opinion the Madison is "a fly fisherman's ideal stream because it's the world's longest riffle, which means the average depth is anywhere between waist-deep to knee-deep. The entire river is like this, over 100 miles probably."

Prime fishing season runs from mid-July through the fall, with late August and September being ideal.

If you are new to the sport, Rod recommends you visit a fly shop (you can easily find one in Ennis and towns throughout the area) to take a one-day lesson or hire a guide.

Fly fishing is known as the "quiet sport," Rod said. Certain areas get crowded during peak season in summer, but there are plenty of solitary places. "You interact with Mother Nature, and you're on her terms, basically. She's dictating what's going to happen."