

Flaming Gorge Reservoir

Buckboard Marina
Green River, Wyoming

Thirty years ago, a man by the name of Ray Johnson, sparked attention to this huge body of water that stretches from southern Wyoming into northern Utah. His catches of giant German Brown trout in the 20-pound plus range were as impressive as the hardships he endured in catching such fish. Not just a few...but many big, trophy-sized browns came to his net.

We always wondered why the browns were so big at Flaming Gorge. They grew to tremendous sizes...and so did the mackinaw or lake trout. Macks in the thirty-pound range are common and every year anglers pull some impressive poundage from the depths of this nutrient rich water. The lake trout record is over fifty pounds.



The reason for the giant fish at Flaming Gorge is the prolific numbers of kokanee salmon it contains. Three-year classes of kokes, at a time, thrive in the ideal conditions of this 91-mile long impoundment of the Green River. The often-digested kokanee offer rich protein to the trophy-sized

predators of the lake. The populations are managed and maintained by both Wyoming Game and Fish and the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources.

Today, it is the kokanee salmon that attract most anglers to the lake. The kokes have grown to trophy-sized proportions due to the food-rich waters of the Green River that feeds the "Gorge". Kokes that grow to four and five pounds are common...and the standing lake record is over six pounds...of battling landlocked sockeye.

Call it a pilgrimage...call it ridiculous, but many Californians are making the 13-hour, each way trip to this destination, with many making multiple or extended stays there every season. It is kokanee fishing...as good as it can be.

California's anglers are fortunate to have a network of kokanee organizations, guides, message boards, fishing periodicals and free flowing information....AND... California's kokanee salmon-catching techniques are quite refined and very successful on this lake. So, the techniques used at your favorite northern California kokanee water will work at the "Gorge" too. You just might want to think about heavier pound test leaders, as some of the big boys can snap your

line right off the release. Eight to ten pound test leaders with a properly-adjusted drag should do nicely.

Dodgers, downriggers and a good quality fish locator are a must. You don't need corn - you can't use it. Just load the lure with your favorite kokanee attracting scent and present it in the "zone" and hang on...you will hook up.

Exaggerated "S" turns will enhance your chances as will accelerating and slowing down that makes lures imitate escaping minnows or baitfish. Varying your speed significantly is often the difference between hooking-up and trolling.

There will be no shortage of fish on your fish locator. You'll know how deep to fish and like California's anglers, the kokanee folks back there are a friendly bunch and will quickly share information, too.

Locals and experienced "Gorge" anglers say this is a "small fish" year for kokanee. Being first-timers, we can't argue the point, but if this is a small fish year, we can't wait to go back...and we're going back twice before the close of kokanee salmon fishing on the lake as of September 9th. After that, you can continue to fish for rainbows, mackinaw, brown trout, bass or catfish or just simply cruise the lake's many scenic locales or check out a quiet cove or two and relax.

Down lake, past the Utah border, there are 600-foot steep bluffs covered in green growth, foliage and trees that will take your breath away. We "blew off" a trip to the bluffs because we kept on fishing for the biggest kokanee of our lives.

We will, of course, eventually check out more of the Gorge... but until we get tired of catching and releasing four to five pound kokes...I think we'll just keep on fishing. The scenery will still be there when we can eventually put the rods to rest!

FLAMING GORGE

It's worth the drive. It's worth the expense. It's worth the effort.

IT'S INCREDIBLE!

Species	Wyoming	Utah
Kokanee	6.04 lbs.	6 lbs.
Brown Trout	25.13 lbs.	33.10 lbs.
Lake Trout (mackinaw)	50 lbs.	51.8 lbs.
Rainbow Trout	23 lbs.	26.2 lbs.

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Campgrounds, RV Parks and resorts dot the lake and offer all the amenities.

We stayed at Buckboard Marina on the Wyoming end of the lake (307.875.6927 or check them out on the web at www.fishinginthewest.com/buckboard). They have campgrounds, RV Park, four lane public launch ramp, store, boat shop and repair center, boat slips and fuel and good information on where to fish for each of your target species.

